

LIGUORIAN

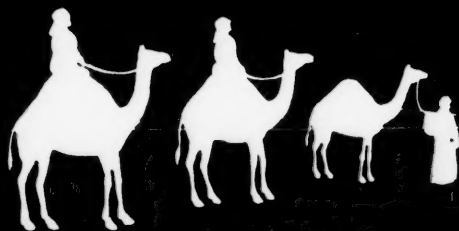
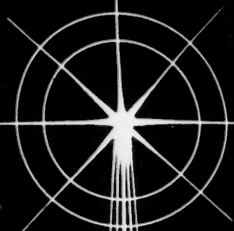
Meditation Before Christmas

Is Christmas Necessary?

Who Owns Your Soul?

DECEMBER, 1956

25¢





THE Liguorian

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and to All That
Brings Happiness to
Human Beings*

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THE LIGUORIAN

LIGUORI, MO.

IS CHRISTMAS NECESSARY?

A strange question, you may say. Yet everything you need depends on how you answer it. Read and see whether you have the right answer.

Donald F. Miller, C.S.S.R.

ON your answer to the question in the above title will depend the manner in which you will celebrate Christmas. If, on the one hand, you permit yourself to think that Christmas is unnecessary, you will probably do one of three things.

You may, as thousands will, completely ignore it. Thus you would go on with your daily routine as if there were no decorations in the streets, no carols in the air, no Christmas cards designed for the season, no invitations to special religious observances.

Or you may, as thousands more will, use Christmas for material advantage, without letting it mean anything for yourself spiritually. Thus you might sell, at a good profit, things that people like to use at Christmas time; you could make a financial killing by dressing up ordinary merchandise as most attractive and desirable for Christmas gifts; you could use Christmas as an occasion for giving

expensive presents to individuals from whom you hope to gain something. But intellectually, spiritually, morally, Christmas means nothing to you.

OR you may, as perhaps the largest number of people will, skim off the sentimental and emotional benefits of Christmas, without letting it have any effect on your mind or your will or your soul at all. Thus you will enjoy singing the pretty carols, preparing Christmas dinners for yourself and perhaps for the poor; gathering with your family around a festive table; perhaps even attending church services for the sake of a momentary, sentimental religious thrill. But you are not convinced that Christmas is absolutely necessary. It is icing on the cake of life. It is a beautiful tradition. It is a time for good will and laughter and song — but nothing more.

If, on the other hand, you are convinced that Christmas is absolutely necessary, first, for yourself as an individual, and then for the world at large, there will be a vast difference

between your way of celebrating the feast and any of the three described above. Anybody who sincerely faces the facts about himself and about Christmas can come to realize the truth that Christmas is the indispensable beginning of happiness for the heart of man. The very proofs for the necessity of Christmas contain in themselves the suggestions as to how it should be properly celebrated. Consider those proofs one by one.

1.

Christmas is necessary because without it you would never possess clear, certain, detailed knowledge of your purpose in life and of how that purpose is to be attained.

Christmas means the coming of Christ into the world. Christ was the Son of God, Who made the world and all the human beings who inhabit it. He came, first of all, to teach, to tell in clear, simple language for what He made you and how you are to attain your most important goal.

WHY could you not know this without God coming to tell you? Because your mind, which was indeed made to know the truth, inherited a disease from your first parents that made it liable to error. Left to itself, unhealed and uncorrected by the forceful voice of God Himself, it could embrace any of an infinite number of untruths about your purpose in the world.

To know what might happen to you without the guidance of the teaching of Christ, just look at the thousands who reject Him or who have never heard of Him. Their the-

ories about the meaning of human life are as myriad as the stars. Their theories change from day to day. Their theories are impractical and often impossible to carry out. They teach one thing and they live another. Their theories are often an obvious attempt to justify the unjustifiable, that is, conduct that any clear thinking mind can recognize as contrary to an eternal law.

Christ came, then, to do away with these contradictions, these gropings, these follies and errors. His explanation of why you were made and what you are to do and what you are to look forward to, satisfy your mind, with its unquenchable thirst for the truth, as soon as you know them. It has been accepted by billions of men and women as soon as it was preached to them. It bears the stamp of God's wisdom and God's authority. It is your only hope of grasping the truth about yourself.

Realizing this, you will prepare for Christmas by trying to know a little more about Christ and His teaching, and about the one Church that has preserved that teaching inviolate down through the years. You will thus prepare by reading a good spiritual book, and meditating on its contents, during the weeks before Christmas.

2.

Christmas is necessary because without it you would still be unredeemed from original sin.

Original sin is a fact about human nature that is evident even after you have accepted Christ and His redemption. It is the only satisfactory expla-

nation of the conflicts in your nature, between your aspirations and your fulfillments; between the part of you that is governed by your mind and the part that is subject to your passions; between the good that you know and the evil that you do. The beginning of all self-knowledge is a recognition of the fact of inherited original sin.

CHRISt came to explain this fact of original sin more clearly than your own mind could analyze it, and then to offer you the only means of healing your wounded nature. As a member of the family of Adam and Eve you shared the penalty imposed by God for their disobedience. The essence of that penalty is that you were abandoned by God to your conflicts, your disappointments, your sorrows, your temporal and eternal frustrations. You were no longer a friend of God, on Whom your peace and happiness depend.

Christ came into the world to win back God's friendship for you. He came to redeem you from frustration and pain. He paid a great price to do this. He did it by dying on a cross for you.

But nothing Christ did for you could be forced upon you. You have to use your free will to accept it, and in some way to pay for it. Thus Christ instituted the Mass as a mysterious repetition of His sacrifice on the cross, so that you could attend Mass and thereby accept His death for yourself. In dying for you, and in giving you the Mass as a means of your personal acceptance of His

death, He did more than redeem you from sin; He chose to elevate you into the dignity of a child of God. He devised also the seven sacraments as means through which you might live and die as a child of God.

ALL this began with Christmas. That is why there is no more appropriate preparation for Christmas than attendance at Mass through Advent, and the reception of the sacraments, especially daily Holy Communion.

3.

Christmas is necessary because without it you would not be able to obey God in all that He commands you to do for the sake of your salvation.

Some people say that they do not have to obey any commandments of God except one, namely, that they believe in Christ as their Redeemer. Not one of these credulous people has ever offered an adequate explanation, in line with his theory, of Christ's own words: "If thou wouldst enter into life, keep my commandments."

Others make a great boast of keeping some of God's commandments, while ignoring or habitually breaking others. Some of these go to church and make pretense of honoring God, while they habitually break some law of God governing their conduct toward their neighbor. Others boast of their fidelity to God's laws against killing, stealing, hating and adultery, while they ignore God and never offer Him their worship and adoration. Neither course amounts to obeying all God's commandments.

BUT no one can obey all God's commandments except through the strength and grace provided by Jesus Christ. He came into the world to give you the three things that make obedience to all God's commandments possible: 1) knowledge of exactly what He wants you to do and to avoid; 2) divine strength always available through the sacraments and prayer; 3) the motives of fear and of love that induce your free will to correspond with the graces given. Even the sinner, who has long been offending God, can receive the gift of mercy and forgiveness, and the grace never to offend God again, through Christ his Redeemer.

Without Christmas, however, nobody would ever be able to obey God in all that He has commanded. For those who know Christ, there can be no true celebration of Christmas without acceptance of the sure means Christ provided for escaping from sin and beginning to live without sin. This means that you will surely prepare for Christmas by a good confession, and a new and confident determination never to offend God again.

4.

Christmas is necessary because without it you would have no answer to the questions and problems that arise from the fact of suffering in this world.

You are not a normal human being if you are not disturbed by the misery that you see all around you in the world. You are not honest if you say that you never ask yourself such questions as this: "Why must there

be wars? Why does disease carry off so many of the young and innocent, as well as the old and evil? Why do catastrophes occur in nature, striking at certain times and in certain places, causing untold hardship and many deaths, without the least semblance of an understandable reason? Why are wicked people, who murder, maim, rob and rape, permitted at times to succeed in their designs against the good? Can a good God be interested in people, when He permits such things? Or can there be a God at all?

There is no answer to these questions, except those of bleak despair and senseless stoicism, outside the revelations that begin with Christmas. Through the coming of Christ into the world, you are given absolute and infallible assurance of a certain number of truths in the light of which the presence of suffering in the world loses its power to evoke despair.

THE first of these truths, which Christ taught by His birth, His life, His sermons and His death, in order to take the challenge out of suffering, is the truth of the reality of eternity, and of your personal survival throughout eternity. He taught you that in eternity you will be in heaven or in hell, according as you choose. Thus the most terrible temporal misfortune, the longest possible life of misery on earth, begins to seem almost insignificant in comparison with an eternity of perfect joy, and in comparison with the horrible and unending sufferings of hell.

The second truth that Christ came to impress upon you, to silence your

complaints about suffering, is that of the uniqueness of the evil that is sin. The manner of His birth, the example of His life, the core of all His sermons, the way of His dying, all were designed to produce this conviction in you: the only real evil in the life of man is sin. In sickness, in pain, in injustice from others, in the loss of honor, friends, money, life itself, He wanted to teach you to say: I can bear this, so long as I can keep myself free from the only real evil which is personal sin — a personal attack on the living God.

The third truth that Christ gave you as a cushion for your sorrows is the truth of the necessity of atonement for sin. He took the lead in this Himself. The sinful human family needed a member who would elevate the value of its sufferings. He became that member, and the first willing victim of atonement for sin by His passion and death on the cross. Innocent Himself, He asked the innocent as well as the guilty members of the human family to share in the atonement for the family's sins. He asked His sinless mother to carry a heavy share of that atonement. He asks all to carry some, and to remember as they carry it, that He carried the heaviest load. In that remembrance, the burden of the individual becomes light indeed.

THUS a part of every true Christian's preparation for Christmas must be a new acceptance of the cross in any form that God may decree, and some voluntary mortification to increase the treasury of the

whole human family's atonement for sin.

5.

Christmas is necessary because without it you would be unable to contribute anything to the peace of the world and the welfare of human society.

This is absolutely certain: if Christ's teaching, as preserved in His infallible Church, were accepted and put into practice by all mankind, there would never be a war, there would never be a broken home or an abandoned (or delinquent) child, there would never be hatred or enmity between human beings, there would never be such human wreckage as is caused by greed, by lust, by pride, by anger, by sloth.

No teaching of any wise man in the history of the world has ever had the power of Christ's teaching to bring peace to the world. Many had maintained that they had a better formula than Christ's, or that they could save the world from strife and discord and man-made unhappiness, without reference to Christ and without dependence on Him. Every one of them has failed and is failing. Only one formula has succeeded wherever it has been tried, and has failed only where men refused to accept it in its fullness.

This means two things for you. Christ willed that the peace of society depend first, on individuals being converted to Him and putting into practice all His teaching; and secondly, that having been fully converted themselves, they become instruments for the conversion of others.

THAT is what He wants of you. That is another reason for the necessity of Christmas. Unless you accept it, with all that it implies for your own immortal soul, you will in some way be an instrument of war and strife in the world. When you have accepted Christmas and all that it implies for your own salvation, you know just exactly what you must do to add even greater and greater numbers to the army of those who are working for the world's peace. You must lead them, win them, show

them, teach them, encourage them to surrender fully to Jesus Christ their Redeemer.

Thus no real Christian can celebrate Christmas without asking himself whether he himself is putting into practice the only true formula for peace that has been given to the world, the formula of Christ, and without casting about for new opportunities to win others to complete surrender to the only Saviour of the world.

MERRY CHRISTMAS!

To an Agnostic

You say you cannot know there is a God—
He may be, and again, He may be not,
And you are but a finely shapen clod
By evolution's witless ways begot.

For such as you the God you choose to doubt
(And all of us who might such doubters be)
Gave Christmas that no man would be without
The evidence of His proximity.

Look closely, friend. The story read complete,
Beginning, end, and all that lies between;
Read humbly, lest a prideful mind may greet
With fool's denial the truth that has been seen.

D.F.M.

Altar-Girl

The first Mass which the little boy noticed with anything more than infantile abstraction happened to be in a convent chapel. A white-veiled novice said the responses, and when the child returned home he gave his father a vivid account of what he had observed:

"The priest came out all dressed in red clothes. I couldn't understand what he said, but every time he turned around to ask a question, an angel answered him."

As a description of a novice, that wasn't too bad.

Quote

Problems of Professional People

The Moral Basis of Surgery

QUESTION: What right has a surgeon to operate on the human body, especially to the extent of removing an organ or a limb, when the fifth commandment of God (as interpreted by the Catholic Church) forbids not only the murder but also the mutilation of a fellow man?

ANSWER: I suppose the average surgeon — even the good Catholic surgeon — never gets any doubts as to his moral right to perform an operation on a person whose health and physical well-being will be aided by surgery. Even when he finds it necessary to excise a limb or an organ that is causing pain or is endangering the life of the patient, the average surgeon never realizes that there is a moral problem involved, the problem brought up by our questioner. For the fifth commandment of God forbids us to mutilate the body of another, and surgery seems to be a transgression of this commandment.

It does not suffice to answer that surgery must be lawful because it produces good results. For, if an operation were contrary to God's law it would not be permissible, no matter how beneficial its results may be. A good end does not justify the use of morally bad means. Hence, in order to prove that surgery is not wrong, we must show that it is not in itself opposed to the fifth commandment of God, which (as the Church in-

terprets it) forbids us to mutilate the body of a fellow man.

The answer to this problem is a principle of Catholic theology which our Holy Father, Pope Pius XII, has frequently emphasized in talks to doctors, the principle of totality. According to this principle, notwithstanding the prohibition of mutilation literally contained in the fifth commandment, God permits a person to sacrifice a part of his body in order to benefit the whole, when no other means of relief is available. God alone possesses direct jurisdiction over man's body; but the Church reasonably presumes that He gives a person the right to destroy a portion of the body when this is necessary for the preservation or healing of the entire body. We sometimes have a similar situation in the dealings of men with one another. The captain of a ship assigned to convey a consignment of goods to a foreign port could lawfully throw overboard a part of the cargo in order to prevent the destruction of the entire consignment — for example, by fire. In such circumstances the owner of the goods can reasonably be presumed to allow the loss of a portion of his goods for the preservation of the rest. Similarly, according to Catholic teaching, God, the owner of man's body, allows him to destroy a portion of his body when the rest of the body will thus be preserved and benefited. And accordingly when surgery is necessary, a person transmits this right,

which he has received from God, to the surgeon. This is an authentic interpretation of the fifth commandment of God by the Catholic Church, to which Christ gave the right to interpret authoritatively the divine law.

IT IS not always necessary that the organ that is removed be diseased. It can be excised if it is a menace to the health or life of the body in its present condition. For example, a man whose hand is caught in a trap can cut it off in order to save his life, even though the hand is in no way diseased. Similarly,

if a woman is afflicted with cancer of the breast, an operation for the removal of the healthy ovaries is permissible when a competent doctor judges that the normal functioning of these organs is building up the cancer cells. For, even though such an operation sterilizes the woman, its direct purpose is the removal of organs that are injurious to the health of the body, and the sterility is an indirect effect.

Very Rev. Francis J. Connell,
C.S.S.R., S.T.D., LL.D.,
Dean, School of Sacred Theology,
Catholic University of America.

For Every Catholic Home

Let the Catholic press gladly renounce the vain profits of a vulgar interest, of cheap popularity; let it know how to maintain its dignity with energy and pride, beyond the reach of all direct and indirect attempts at corruption; let it have the courage — even at the price of financial sacrifice — to banish mercilessly from its columns any advertisement, any item that offends faith or honesty.

If the Catholic press does this, it will gain in intrinsic worth and end by winning esteem and, therefore, trust. It will justify the oft-repeated slogan, "a Catholic paper in every Catholic home."

Address of Pope Pius XII to International
Catholic Press Congress.

Free for All

Recently a meteorite fell on and through a house in Alabama, hitting a woman tenant. The Air Force took the meteorite for examination. The woman and her husband hired a lawyer to get it back from the Air Force. Now the owner of the house has hired a lawyer to get the chunk of rock away from the tenants. Everybody is in the act, scrambling for possession of the missile from heaven. Would that people were as anxious for that impalpable but living gift from heaven, the grace of God. It is available for all. One person's having it does not mean another person's being deprived of it. And it is incomparably more valuable than this thing which, it is estimated, will bring its owner \$5,000. The grace of God brings life everlasting.

Catholic Transcript

WHO OWNS YOUR SOUL?

Adapted from a
Catholic Hour
radio address by

JOSEPH E. MANTON, C.S.S.R.

IN this modern age when undertakers have become morticians, and barbers tonsorial artists, and street cleaners sanitary engineers, it is reassuring to remember that a pawnshop is still . . . a pawnshop. The painted wooden Indian no longer stands sentinel before the cigar stores. The huge shoe that used to swing in the wind outside the cobbler's door is now likely to be a pink neon sign proclaiming "Ye Bootie Shoppe." But, at least it is nice to recall that, almost alone in a changing world, the three balls still gleam above the pawnshop — the gilded shamrock glittering over the city streets.

I bring up this matter of pawnshops because December 6 happens to be the feast of the saint who is the

patron of pawnshops, at least in an indirect way. His name is St. Nicholas. Now everybody knows that through the friction of use and the erosion of time, St. Nicholas has become St. Niklaus, and finally Santa Claus; though the original St. Nicholas, a kindly old bishop of southern Italy, would have blinked gentle astonishment at the notion of chauffeuring chimney-minded reindeer on a gusty Christmas eve. However, he did have the habit of leaving presents with something of a flourish.

Once he tossed three purses of gold into a poor man's window so that the three daughters would have a dowry and could enter into honorable marriage. Well, the story got around, and naturally it grew, and by the time it reached Lombardy in the north, the bishop had heaved into the window three bulging bags of gold. Who should then adopt St. Nicholas as their patron — he was dead by now — but the money lenders of Lombardy! And over their banking houses blossomed the three golden balls which the cynical interpret as "two to one you won't get it back."

BUT there is a very sober side to a pawnshop. Every pawnshop window is a pathetic little history of humanity — of human vanities and hobbies and treasures and failures. Behind the black-grilled gates folded across the front, somebody's happiness is there in jail, waiting to be bailed out. Look at the windows: watches and fishing rods and cameras and diamond rings; pearl-handled revolvers and blue-barreled rifles; binoculars that, however powerful, still could see no hope in the future; the inevitable mandolin that once knew merry tinkling nights; in fact musical instruments enough to equip a little orchestra. You wonder what the window would look like if all the owners took their places behind them. And inside this shop where there is no merriment, perhaps a man with a black coat and a cold appraising eye, and a faint, carved smile like the smile of a king in a pack of cards.

Every now and then the police find a dead vagrant in a dark corner along a city street, and in his pocket perhaps nothing but a couple of pawn tickets. You can read the story there. He gave up something valuable, maybe a handsome ring; and now all that is left is a soiled bit of paper. Oh, there was something else, there were the few dollars he got, but they slipped through his fingers like water — water or something stronger. But isn't this the very process of sin?

In a way, the devil is a pawnbroker. He takes your soul, your innocence, your clean conscience, sparkling and clear as a white diamond, and he gives you some sensual pleasure

that is gone like the flare of a match, and you have nothing but a soiled memory, a little stub of remorse that never lets you forget that you have given up something precious, and you will never be really happy till you get it back — because *it belongs to you!*

SOME patrons of the pawnshop redeem their little diamond regularly — say once a month. They have it for a few days and then, after a wild time, they go on the rocks and their diamond goes in hock.

So it goes with their little treasure month after month; in and out, in and out. But most of the time it is in the pawnbroker's safe, and they carry nothing with them but a nagging reminder.

There are people like that, too, on the street of life, with souls in pawn. They don't really own their own soul. If possession is nine-tenths of the law, nine-tenths of the time it is in possession of the devil. I mean people who come not to grated doors of the pawnshop, but to the grilled screen of the confessional, perhaps every few months and redeem their shining innocence, their peace of conscience, their soul. But a few days later, they have pawned it for pleasure, and the rest of the month they do not have it — have nothing but a guilty conscience to remind them that their soul is in the devil's keeping.

However, underline this difference heavily. If you leave anything in a pawnshop, say even an overcoat, your uncle there will take better care of it than you would. It will be hung

very neatly, securely locked up against thieves, carefully stored away so that it will never become a Blue-plate Special for moths. You'll get your pawned overcoat back in a superb condition. But it isn't like that in the devil's pawnshop. The more often your soul goes over the counter of sin, the longer it stays in that musty and mouldering vault of bad habits, the more it deteriorates; the thinner, the weaker, the more flimsy and sleazy it becomes. And when you really need it, it just won't stand up.

IF you were to ask me what is the best season for the pawnshop, I would tell you that in times of depression, pawnbrokers are never depressed. It is the same with the soul. In periods of personal depression, or discouragement, people will slink into the little shop of sin, who in a happier hour would briskly pass it by. Self-pity is the side door of sin. It isn't all lit up in the front like glamorous temptation, but it gets us in just the same.

When we are down in spirits, our only hope is to go up in spirit to God! If something has got us down, the best thing is to go down further — on our knees. It may not settle our problem, but it will settle our soul, and when we stand up, we shall be better able to stand up to our trouble.

If depression is the pawnshop's best season, Monday is its busiest day. Ask the pay envelope — the pay envelope that was so fat on Friday night, but over the week-end went through some strenuous reducing ex-

ercises. Too much dice or cards, dogs or horses, Scotch or rye — this was the dumbbell reducing routine that took the bulge off the little bank-roll.

And by the same token, isn't the soul weakest over the week-end? Aren't more souls sold out, more sin committed, innocence bartered, self-respect surrendered, ideals given up, resolutions broken, promises forgotten, and commandments shattered *over the week-end*? Wouldn't it be better if we all took a tip from experience and were doubly careful on doubly dangerous days?

This is not a sour indictment of wholesome recreation. Real religion flourishes under the bright banner of joy. But like mushrooms and toadstools, there is often a deadly difference between pleasure and happiness. It simply means we have to pick our recreations carefully especially over the week-end.

Theoretically, every article in a pawnshop is waiting to be *redeemed*. Did you ever wonder what happens to the unredeemed articles? After a certain time they are disposed of at public auction, almost like a little general judgment. But first the owner has to be warned. He is given a chance to salvage what he has given over.

GOD acts in pretty much the same way with people who have given over their souls to sin, people whose souls are in pawn. He gives His own warning. Sometimes it is death tapping on the shoulder and beckoning away someone who only yesterday strode briskly at our side. Sometimes it is a spell of sickness

flinging us on our back and letting us see how different the world looks when viewed from the horizontal. But always it whispers, "This life is only a bridge between a brief here and an eternal hereafter. How foolish to concentrate on the bridge and forget the goal!"

But what good would be the warning — that souls in sin, souls in pawn must be redeemed before that final auction, if we do not have the means to redeem them? Truly enough we have not. But across the scarlet horizon of the world of sin, out of the merciful bosom of God there walks toward us His only Son, whose very name is "The Redeemer."

The prophets of old stood in their high towers and with straining eyes looked for and longed for His coming. That is what the very word *Ad-vent* means; and during this sacred season we rehearse their vigil, our own eyes fixed on the golden speck of the oncoming Christmas Star. He is coming — our Redeemer — who

counts not the cost of the Redemption.

Judas Iscariot was to ask cynically, "How much for a God?" And they counted out thirty clinking pieces of silver. If Jesus Christ had been asked by His heavenly Father, "How much for man? How much will You pay to *redeem* him?" our Saviour would have answered, "I will give every drop of My blood." And He did — poured out His blood like rubies from the cross. And now through Christ's redemptive blood the sinner receives the price, the grace of true sorrow and purpose of amendment, to buy back his soul from Satan.

DO we still go on treating Christ as if He were worth only thirty pieces of silver — selling Him and our soul over the counter of sin? We can best answer that by treasuring our soul as it deserves. There is no jewel in any pawnshop in the world one tenth so precious. A pure soul is a pearl of great price that one day will buy heaven.

MERRY CHRISTMAS!

To One Dying in the Grace of God

The world sees only sadness in your state;
A tragedy, it's called, of cruel fate.

But on this day a birth took place that made
Death's darkness into light that cannot fade.

You'll see Him soon, know Him as you are known,
Will share His life, will call His home your own.

All other Merry Christmases will be
Forgotten when the face of Christ you'll see.

D.F.M.

ITALY'S FAVORITE CHRISTMAS CAROL

St. Alphonsus Liguori who spent much of his time in the serious business of preaching mission sermons was also an accomplished musician. Here is the story that tells how he wrote a Christmas carol for the people of a little Italian town.

DONALD MACKINNON, C.S.S.R.

THE last confession had been heard that night. The spry old sacristan, jingling his keys, wished the missionary father a good night. Then he locked the doors behind them and scurried homewards.

That left the priest alone.

He looked around the little town. Nola. Set lightly on the lovely hills of southern Italy. The main road between Salerno and Naples ran through the town. Or you could take the cut-off and travel out along the Amalfi peninsula with the Isle of Capri at its end.

Quite a few lights still burned in the town. People getting home from the mission. Were they talking about the sermon? Or about the slightly chilly night air? Or about Christmas just two days away? The priest wondered.

As he walked thoughtfully down the cobbled street, he asked himself several questions about Nola and the shepherds and vine-growers who lived there. Were these people profiting from the mission he was preaching? Would their faith be really stronger for the extra rosary they said each night with him? Had they learned to make their own, the stories he told them of the first Christmas? Would Nola remember two or three years from now that they had had a Christmas mission and promised to be better Catholics?

These things meant a lot to the missionary father. He had spent the last twenty years of his life trying to help people be good Catholics.

THE bareheaded priest who walked down Nola's curving streets that night was Father Alphonsus Liguori. Someday the Catholic Church would call him a canonized saint. Pius XII would name him patron of priests engaged in hearing confessions. Saint Alphonsus would be hailed as the Doctor of Prayer.

"Save your immortal soul. It's the one thing important in this life." Tonight Father Alphonsus was very much concerned about that capital ideal. He had vowed his life to work for souls.

But how could he make the carefree little town of Nola, and all the rest of Italy for that matter, remember salvation? How do you make eternity stick in people's minds, especially at Christmas time?

As he crossed into the street where his lodgings were, a thought popped into his head. There *was* a way to make people remember the mission, even at Christmas.

He'd write a Christmas carol.

The words he could work out tonight before going to bed. Tomorrow morning, with the town awake, he would compose the melody to carry the words.

THAT'S how Italy woke up one Christmas eve to find itself in the midst of a new and catching Christmas carol. Before long every Italian bagpipe (there are such things) and cennamella and fiddle from Sicily to the Alps would echo its tune. Opera sing-

ers and chimneysweeps alike fell in love with its rhythm.

There are two reasons for its success. One, St. Alphonsus told the story of the Incarnation in his verse. He put the center back into the pretty routine of sleigh bells and angels' wings. Two, he knew how to write a winning tune. For the Saint, who spent so much of his time in the very serious business of preaching and hearing confessions, was one of the most accomplished musicians of his day.

How did he introduce the song? That's a tiny tale in itself.

He wrote the original copy of *Tu Scendi dalle Stelle* (which means *From starry skies descending*) at the home of his Nola host, Father Michael Zambadelli.

Of course, Father Michael wanted a copy as soon as he'd seen the original score. But his missionary guest said, "No." The first copy that could be made would be sent to Remondini, his publisher. There wouldn't be a chance to make another copy before Father Alphonsus left Nola. His friend would have to wait. As a matter of fact, he should be on his way back to the church for the sermon right now.

He put the music on top of the clavichord and left.

Father Michael looked at his feet, then over at the clavichord and finally peeked out the curtain to watch the black-robed figure disappearing down the street. His Italian common sense told him he

was being silly. He knew it wasn't dignified. But if he just took the music along to church with him, just to run over the tune and memorize a few of the words, he could bring it back as soon as the services were over.

SO off he went to the church, music in hand, whistling the tune as he walked along. As he drew near the church, he was puzzled not to hear the singing of the congregation.

Inside he found Father Liguori standing in the pulpit and three altar boys he himself had trained for benediction, sitting uncomfortably in the high carved chairs the priests used at solemn Mass. Father Liguori was talking about his new Christmas song. He said he could think of no better way to teach it to the people than to sing it for them himself.

"Tu scendi dalle stelle," he began in his rich full voice, just beginning to show the signs of fifty-eight winters.

Heads began to sway back and forth, timed to the lilting beat of the missionary's voice. A few of the younger set even forgot that their toes were in church and let them tap along with the tune.

Suddenly the music stopped short.

Father Liguori waited a minute. Then he admitted, "I'm afraid I've forgotten the rest."

He called one of the altar boys over to the pulpit and whispered something in his ear.

A churchful of eyes followed the boy as he walked from the pulpit towards the back entrance of the church. A few eyes noticed an enormous blush coming over Father Michael Zambadelli's face. But to his great relief Father Liguori managed to remember the words just as the boy drew up and asked, "Could I have the music for the Father in the pulpit?"

FOR some reason Father Michael never tried to borrow anything again in his life. But he consoled himself with the memory of that cheery look Father Alphonsus had smiled when he admitted, "Well, it wasn't exactly a vision I needed to tell me where I might find that music."

Such was the most unusual launching of one of the greatest Christmas carols Italy has ever known. Forty-two lines to tell sweetly the real story of the first Christmas night. Music with the bright air of a folk tune to carry it along. *Tu scendi dalle stelle* actually did set all of Italy on the road to a better understanding of the right kind of Christmas. The carol designed to put the truths of the mission in the minds of Nola's shepherds is still sung throughout the land.

On December 28, 1954, a special program was broadcast from Vatican Radio commemorating the two hundredth anniversary of St. Alphonsus' Christmas melody. The program was called, appropriately, *Italy's Favorite Christmas Carol*.

FOR NON-CATHOLICS ONLY

Louis G. Miller, C.S.S.R.

OBJECTION: I am a Protestant, and I wanted to marry a Catholic girl, but the priest told me I couldn't unless I signed certain promises. I refused to do this, and my fiancée promptly broke our engagement. Why does the Catholic Church interfere when two people love each other?

ANSWER: We sympathize with our objector in his broken romance, but at the same time we must confess admiration for the girl who had the courage to follow her convictions.

As for an explanation of her attitude, our objector must try to understand that to a convinced Catholic, the one supreme purpose of life is to win heaven by his manner of life here on earth. Now Christ founded a religion precisely for this purpose, to guard and guide the soul on its way to heaven. Christ did not found many religions; He founded only one and Catholics believe that theirs is that one true religion founded by Christ. Nothing in life (not human romance, not money, not anything else) is nearly as important as preserving intact that gift of the true faith which offers a sure pathway to heaven.

Now past experience has made it clear that the Catholic who marries a non-Catholic is running a risk of losing the faith. In the close union of married life, lack of

Mixed Marriage Promises

sympathy and understanding of one's religion on the part of one's married partner can easily have a wearing and corroding effect on one's faith.

THE Catholic Church therefore has made it plain that she fears and in general does not approve of such marriages. If in exceptional cases she grants permission for them, it can only be because she has reassured herself that the faith of the Catholic party is properly safeguarded, and that the children of such a marriage be brought up in the faith which Catholics regard as the one true faith.

If the Church does not have these reassurances, she cannot in conscience approve of such a marriage. The promises which the non-Catholic is asked to sign are designed to give these reassurances. If he can sign them in conscience, and intends to keep them, well and good. If not, let him go his way with the realization that he will thus save himself and the one he had intended to marry much heartache and bitterness during the long years of married life. For only bitterness can result from promises made falsely and not kept in a marriage without union of minds in the most important area of life.

We pray for our objector, that he may find happiness in the truth, and for his former fiancée, that God may greatly reward her courage and her faith.

Meditation for Christmas

Pause a moment, in your busy, active preparations for Christmas, and make this meditation. Better still, make it, or a similar one, every day during Advent.

LEONARD F. HYLAND, C.S.S.R.

THE perfect meditation for Christmas is one that is based on the five joyful mysteries of the rosary. Indeed, it is recommended that, throughout Advent and the remainder of the Christmas season, whenever only five decades of the rosary are recited in a day, these be devoted to meditation on the joyful mysteries.

By this means one can place oneself in a perfect spiritual mood for the celebration of Christmas, and at the same time gain many lasting benefits and graces for the soul. For these reasons we present here a sample meditation on each of the five joyful mysteries of the rosary that any Christian can use and add to as he goes along. In each meditation there are four parts: 1) the scene presented to the imagination; 2) the primary lesson that it teaches; 3) the examination of conscience that it evokes; 4) the prayers and petitions and affections it draws forth from the soul.

I. The Annunciation

1. *The scene:* I behold, O Jesus, the touching circumstances in which

Your coming into the world as my Redeemer was first made known and then made to take place. Mary, Your chosen one, is kneeling in her home at Nazareth in prayer. Your angel Gabriel appears before her, uttering the words that have never since died away from the lips of mankind: "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee . . ." Mary's eyes look startled, but the angel continues, in rapturous accents, to complete his message: "Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb and bring forth a son: and thou shalt call His name Jesus. He shall be great and shall be called the Son of the Most High. . . . He shall reign forever . . . and of His kingdom there shall be no end." Mary expresses one heart-wrung question, "How shall this be . . . ?" And the angel answers that the Holy Ghost will come upon her. And a sign shall be given of the truth of the word, the sign of Elizabeth, in her old age, also bearing a child. Then Mary utters the words that bring you, Jesus, down into her womb: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord. Be it done to me according to Thy word."

2. *The lesson:* What is the first lesson that I should learn, O Jesus, from the story of the announcement to Mary that the time had come for You to appear in the world as my Redeemer? It is the lesson of faith. By faith You ask me to accept Your voice as truly the voice of God. You make it easy for me to do this, because for every word You speak You give a sign as proof that Your voice is the voice of God. Yet You also make it meritorious, because You leave it possible for me to turn away from the signs and not to listen to Your voice at all. Your first message came through Gabriel, while You silently took up Your abiding in Mary's womb. But that message was to be followed by a vast outpouring of lessons and truths from Your life. You want me to believe You, and believing You, to be saved. O Lord, help me to believe!

3. *Examination:* How have I believed, O Jesus, the glad tidings You came to make known to me? Have I not passed many days of my life without thinking of You, without trying to conform my life perfectly to the divine pattern You set before me? Have I not lived too long as if there had never been an annunciation, an incarnation, a making known of Your plans for me? Have I not lived too long as if there were only food and drink, clothing and shelter, bodily comfort and pleasure, to absorb my concern? Do I not need the annunciation as if it were being made personally to me, telling me that now heaven is about to speak to me, and

I must listen and then live daily by what I hear?

4. *Affections:* O Jesus, I thank You for taking pity on my sinfulness and weakness and ignorance, and for coming down into the world to teach me, to restore me to the beloved family of Your Father. Don't ever permit me to listen to the voice of false prophets and erring teachers, now that I know that You, the infinite and eternal wisdom, have come to teach me. Don't ever permit me to forget what You came to teach, or, remembering, to act contrary to its mandates. O Mary, Lady of the Annunciation, the first one to whom God made Himself known in the new law, obtain for me a share in your faith, in your fidelity, in your cooperation with the voice of God.



II. The Visitation

1. *The scene:* The sign promised by the angel has been given: news comes to Mary that her childless and elderly cousin Elizabeth is miraculously with child. O Jesus, I behold Mary, inspired by charity, making the long journey from Galilee into Judea to be with her cousin. I see the prophetic meeting between these two favored souls. I hear Elizabeth's inspired cry at sight of Mary, as God Himself reveals to her that Mary is already carrying beneath her heart the promised Redeemer: "Blessed art thou amongst women! . . . Whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" I hear Mary's wondrous answer. "My soul

doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour."

mighty from their seat; He hath exalted the humble."

2. *The lesson:* There are many lessons, O my Jesus, that leap into my mind as it ponders this incident You saw fit to reveal to me. There is the lesson of charity toward my fellow man, later to be so often and so strongly stressed in Your words, that springs from Mary's thoughtfulness toward Elizabeth. There is the lesson of hope, of certainty that You will fulfill all Your promises to me, that springs from the quickness with which You showed Mary the sign You promised her on the day of the annunciation. There is the lesson of gratitude, so magnificently expressed in Mary's *Magnificat*. But above all there is the lesson of humility. Your mother sought no praise for herself for the great honor You had bestowed upon her. At the inspired words of Elizabeth she spoke only of the debt she owed to You, the Mighty One "Who had done great things in her."

3. *Examination:* How often, O my Jesus, has not pride and self-glorification ruined even my good works! How often have I not preferred my judgment, my will, my worldly plans and ambitions, to the glorious destiny You designed for me! How often have I not rebelled against Your commandments and sought some pleasure or gain in what You have forbidden! My pride is ever before me, against the background of Mary's humility and the all-embracing lesson of her words: "He hath put down the

4. *Affections:* O Jesus, I love You, and I surrender myself entirely to Your will and Your authority today. Let me no longer think that there is any joy or any peace or any profit to be gained except in submission to You. Like Mary, let me say, both in honor and dishonor, in pleasure and in pain, "He that is mighty hath done great things in me, and holy is His name."

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III. The Birth of Jesus

1. *The scene:* This, O Jesus, is the scene from which stem all the good things that I or my fellow men can ever know. I see Your mother and her holy spouse Joseph wandering about near Bethlehem seeking a place in which You can be born. I see them rejected by the innkeepers, sighting the barren cave designed to shelter animals, entering within and preparing as well as they can the manger in which new-born animals have lain. I look with wondering eyes like those of Mary and Joseph, upon the infant form in which You chose to enter our world. I hear the angels singing, and the shepherds and kings adoring, and I kneel with them to say: "O long awaited Saviour, I adore You, I love You, I will serve You forever."

2. *The lesson:* All that I need to learn, O Jesus, You begin to teach me at the moment of Your birth. Here at Your manger I realize how

much I need a Redeemer, how much I need the death You will suffer for me, how much I need Your instructions, Your sublime revelations of new truths, Your glorious promises of happiness and heaven. But, above all, You make me realize, by the manner of Your birth, my need of detachment from this world to dispose myself for faith in You and the graces necessary for my salvation. You owned the world, yet You chose its poorest shelter for Your first home. You were the all-powerful King of kings, yet You chose to appear as a helpless baby; You deserved the love of every human being on earth, yet You chose to have but few friends to honor Your birth. So I must be detached from my possessions, from my desire for honor, even from my friends and loved ones, in the sense that I must never permit these things to lessen my love for You or my hope of salvation and heaven.

3. *Examination:* How ashamed I should be, O Jesus, when I gaze upon Your stable and Your manger, Your weakness and Your loneliness, that I have been so inordinately concerned over having a beautiful and expensive home, over being popular and possessing the love of many friends, over attaining positions of honor and power over others! Teach me to be content with little, as you were content with nothing; to place Your friendship above that of all others and to make it the measure and object of my love for human friends; to desire to be the least

among many, and to use any honor or authority that comes to me only as a means of serving my fellow men and leading them to You.

4. *Affections:* I love You, Infant Saviour of my soul. I acknowledge Your divine authority and wisdom and goodness and power, even though I behold You on the day of Your birth as a dependent little baby. Let this love of mine grow as it ponders Your growth through infancy and youth to manhood, as You will impress ever more deeply upon my mind, by the signs and wonders You will manifest, by the divine beauty of Your teaching, by the supreme love of Your sacrifice on the cross for me, the truth that You are indeed my Lord and my God, my Master and My Saviour, my only hope of happiness forever. O Mary, let me share the joy you felt when you first held in your arms the baby Who was God.

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IV. The Presentation in the Temple

1. *The scene:* I contemplate, O Jesus, the scene in which Your mother, obedient to the law that God had imposed upon His people, carries You to the temple to offer You, her first-born Son, to the Father in heaven, at the same time presenting the gifts prescribed by law to be given on such occasions by the poor. I see the eyes of the saintly Simeon filled with tears as he takes You in his arms, and, inspired by God, cries out that You are the Saviour, the glory of Your own people, a light of revela-

tion to the Gentiles, a source of deepest sorrow to Your mother, the One through Whom they who believe in You will rise into heaven, and they Who reject You will be condemned to hell.

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2. *The lesson:* One great lesson You sought to teach me, O Jesus, even so early in Your life on earth. It is the lesson of obedience as the first manifestation of my subjection to God. You were the Maker of all laws and therefore above all laws; You had revealed through Moses and the prophets of the Old Law what rites were to be observed by those who awaited Your coming; now You inspire Your mother to observe one of those laws. When You grow to manhood You will found a Church and entrust to human but chosen representatives the power to bind and loose, to teach and exhort, to administer the boundless graces You came to merit for us all. As you were obedient to the prescriptions of the Old Law, so I must be obedient to those of the New, looking upon Your Church as Your voice and Your authority in the world.

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3. *Examination:* How easy it has been for me, O Jesus, to resent and to rebel against Your authority, especially when it has been exercised through the human delegates whom You have chosen to speak to me in Your Church! How many are the voices that encourage me to make a distinction between You and Your Church, and to profess allegiance to

You but to scorn the voice of Your Church! How often I have found myself excusing my faults, defending even my grave sins, on the ground that I knew better than Your Church what was necessary for my salvation! In Your earliest childhood You were obedient to laws made by God but administered by men; so I can never be Your friend and never enjoy the redemption You won for me, unless I am as obedient to Your Church as I would be to You if You were to come and speak directly to my soul.

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4. *Affections:* I ask nothing, O Jesus, but to be united with You forever. I want nothing but to know Your will and to have the courage and grace to fulfill it. In many things Your will is made known to me only through Your Church, and I am united to You only through my obedience to that which Your apostle Paul taught me to call Your mystical body in the world. Grant me the grace to be obedient to all my lawful superiors; to know that, if ever I despise Your Church or set my judgment or my will above its decrees, I am no longer Your follower or friend. O Mary, humbly obeying the law imposed upon your people, teach me to think with the Church, to ask with the Church, to live with the Church, to die in the Church, as my only means of salvation through Christ your Son.

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V. The Finding in the Temple

1. *The scene:* I see, O Jesus, the humanly moving, yet divinely mys-

terious event in which You permitted Your mother and foster-father to suffer three days of anxiety while You were lost to them. I see them hurrying back into Jerusalem, going from house to house and from friend to friend, their anguish mounting with every disappointment. I see their tears of joy and relief as at last they find You, a 12-year-old boy among the bearded doctors of the law in the temple, amazing them by Your explanations of God's decrees. I hear their plaintive cry, "Why have You done this?" and Your answer: "Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?"

2. *The lesson:* I know, O Jesus, that You were sent by Your Father to be the teacher and redeemer of all mankind, to take up Your abode in a temple in their midst, and there to give them the bread of truth and bread of life. Your mother's finding You in the temple is a foreshadowing of the wonderful truth You would one day reveal, that You would remain in every Catholic Church to the end of time in the sacrament of Your Body and Blood present upon the altar. We who seek You like Your mother and foster-father in Jerusalem can always find You, our companion, our friend, our food, at the altar railing, behind the tabernacle door, in the reenactment of Your death for us at morning Mass.

3. *Examination:* How weak my faith has been, O Jesus, in the most glorious revelation You made known to me, that I might find You, body and blood, soul and divinity, in the

Mass and the Blessed Sacrament! How often I have permitted many days to pass without my seeking You where I knew I could find You, near the glow of the sanctuary lamp that burns forever to mark Your presence in our midst! How many days of my life have gone by without Communion, with no thought of the Mass being offered a few steps away, without a brief visit with You in Your sacramental home! How empty and wasted will seem such days when I behold You face to face, and recognize the only beauty I ever longed to behold in the world!

4. *Affections:* O Jesus, I want to love You with the same love that brought such sorrow to the hearts of Mary and Joseph when they were seeking You, and such rapture to their hearts when they found You in the temple. I need never lose You; You have placed Yourself close to me; I can always find You and be with You as You have chosen to remain with me. Grant me a strong, practical faith in Your presence in the holy sacrament of the altar; grant me a love strong enough to inspire me to receive You in Holy Communion every day; grant me the power to help others, who do not know You or who have lost You, to find You in one of the temples of Your love. O Mary, chosen by God to bring my Saviour into the world, destined thereby to be my spiritual mother, take my hand and lead me as a little child to the altar where your Son awaits me, that through Him and with Him and in Him I may be with you both forever.

MODEL for the UNMARRIED

St. Zita

LOUIS G. MILLER, C.S.S.R.

WOMEN outside the convent who remain unmarried are often the target of unjust and unkind criticism. Shallow and short-sighted observers try to make it appear that theirs is a life of complete frustration, and that inevitably they must grow soured and embittered because human romance has passed them by.

That there are some who give way to feelings of extreme self-pity cannot of course be denied. To say that such a collapse is inevitable is nothing short of grave injustice. To remain unmarried in the world is for some a definite and clear vocation from God. Such a life, generously followed, can be the direct opposite of frustration. It can be a full and beautiful unfolding of talents and virtues in the service of God and one's fellow man.

As a bright example of such a life, consider, if you will, the career of the humble serving maid, St. Zita.

HOME AND CHILDHOOD

A FREUDIAN looking for an Oedipus complex or something of the kind in Zita's background would be sorely disappointed. Hers was by all accounts a good and normal home, in which the parents were devoted to each other, to their family and to their faith.

She was born into stirring times: the era of King St. Louis of France, great ruler and crusader; of St. Thomas Aquinas and the schoolmen, ushering in the golden age of Catholic thinkers. It was the century of the guilds and the beautifully integrated organization of society of which the great cathedrals such as Rheims and Chartres came to be the living exemplification.

Into this thirteenth, "greatest of centuries," as one critic has called it, Zita was born in the Italian village of Monte Sagrati.

Of these early years two incidents have been recorded for us by biographers, both of which shed light on her as a well-balanced child, both grave and sweet in her demeanor.

Even when Zita was a small child, her mother found it very easy to accustom her to that self-discipline which every child must learn, or else be spoiled. The mother had only to say: "Zita, this is pleasing to God," or "this would displease God," to win the child's immediate obedience.

But she was no precociously pietistic youngster. Her parents, it is said, would send her to market with a large basket of the garden produce which they raised. Such were her sweet and winning ways that invariably she immediately found customers for her wares and returned to her home with her basket empty and her mission successfully accomplished.

CAREER WOMAN

AT THE age of 12, Zita was, according to the custom of that time, launched upon her humble career as a servant girl. She found herself in the house of the wealthy Fatinelli family in the town of Lucca, eight miles distant from her village.

Here Zita was to spend the rest of her years on this earth, 48 years in all, in the daily round of duties of a servant, neither more nor less. At first, we are told, she was resented by her fellow servants who, it is hinted, tried to shake her ideals of purity and devotion to her faith. A holy person like Zita inevitably awakens the hostility of the indifferent,

who see in such a life a reproach to their own ill-treated conscience.

Zita, delated on slanderous charges to her master, would not defend herself, and for a time lived under a cloud. But in the end, because of her gentle and winning ways, she won the complete affection of her household. Indeed it is said she came to be the only one who could reason with her master in the fierce outbursts of temper it was his wont to indulge.

Did marriage ever enter into Zita's thoughts? Doubtless it must have, as it must enter the thoughts of every normal girl. There is no explanation offered by her biographers as to why she remained unmarried, but surely the following speculation is well-founded.

Remaining unmarried may have been for her in the beginning at least the result of circumstances, and not due to any formal or deliberate choice on her part. Coming from a poor family, and lacking a dowry or the means to secure one (a servant girl of those days did not receive a "salary" in the modern sense of the word) she had at first little opportunity to find a life-partner.

If this was the case with Zita, she did not allow herself to repine. On the contrary, she accepted her situation as a manifestation of God's will, with firm trust that God would use her in His own way and in His own time as an instrument of good in the world.

BUT what is more likely is that Zita remained unmarried by definite choice, at least after her

early years of working in the Fatinel-li household. Biographers agree that she was well-favored and of a sweet disposition, and therefore must not have lacked admirers. But against their appeals Zita remained firm. She had found a greater lover, One who more and more absorbed the devotion of her unselfish heart, and this lover of hers, of course, was God Himself.

Thus Zita found her true vocation in life. She did not enter the convent, as did an older sister of hers, nor did she admit the thought of marriage and a family. Her way was the way of the few, who nevertheless have an important work to perform in the world, and who one day will receive a special reward for their unselfishness.

THE END AND THE BEGINNING

AS ST. ZITA passed her middle years, she continued to discharge her duties with vigor, while still brighter burned the flame of devotion to her ideals. Blessed with good health, she was active until her sixtieth year, and in that year came the time for her to go home to God.

She was sick only a few days, suffering the pains of her sickness with great patience, and receiving gratefully and devoutly the sacraments of the dying. On April 27, 1278, she died, and was buried in the church of St. Frediano, where she had every day gone to offer up her prayers to God. Three times in the following century, we are told, her body was exhumed, and three times found to be incorrupt.

After the usual rigorous examination of her life, Zita was canonized by Pope Innocent XII in 1696.

POINTS FOR PONDERING

1. St. Zita was far from being a pious dreamer or a religious sentimentalist. A saying of hers has come down through the centuries which illumines her as a person of common sense and devotion to hard work. "A servant is not good if she is not industrious: work-shy piety in people of our position is sham piety."

The thought might thus be expressed in modern terms: healthy activity and occupation are necessary for the unmarried woman so that her piety may be genuine and well-balanced.

2. Kindness, thoughtfulness and charity were the keynote of Zita's life, as they are of any saint. We are told she often gave up her own bed to some poor woman, while she herself slept on the floor. She could never resist a beggar's appeal for food.

Once, as she was going to Mass in winter, her master, seeing her leave the house, threw his fur coat over her shoulders. On entering the church, which was only a few blocks away, she saw a beggar shivering with cold in the doorway. At once her heart was touched; and she put the fur coat over the beggar's shoulders, while at the same time telling him that she would have to reclaim it on coming out of church.

Alas, the beggar took himself off with his fine coat, and poor Zita dreaded facing her master's wrath. Face it, however, she had to, and it

was not until some hours later that a knock was heard at the door, and the beggar appeared, holding the coat over his arm. After presenting it to its owner the beggar disappeared.

Whether the story be fully authentic or not, there is to this day in the church of St. Frediano in Lucca a door known as the "angel's door," because there Zita passed the test of true charity God wished to give to her.

3. One small remark by early biographers of St. Zita points up the deep devotion she manifested to the important practices of her faith. Every morning, we are told, she would sacrifice an hour of sleep that she might get up before the rest of the household and attend daily Mass.

Many a modern counterpart of Zita does the same; it is a sacrifice especially appropriate to an unmarried woman, without the cares of a family and small children. For the unmarried woman, indeed, daily Mass and Communion can and should be the strong support in the occasional loneliness which will come upon her. For if she thus makes God the very center of her daily life, she will experience the peace and joy that belong only to God's good servants.

TACT

It makes you curb that nasty crack
When you are on the brink;
It's really thinking all you say,
Not saying all you think.

F. G. Kernan in
The American Legion

SAINTS WHO ARE SCIENTISTS

"No age has ever needed saints in every walk of life as does this Atomic Age, since only saints can be trusted with secrets potentially so disastrous as are those of modern science," declared Archbishop Richard J. Cushing in a sermon given at the new cylindrically-shaped chapel at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where Mass is offered daily for Catholic students attending the institute.

"Spiritual values can bring men together as surely as matter divides them," continued the Archbishop. "Science makes a unique and mighty contribution to the forging of a united world community. This great institute gives the world scientists whose power may reach the outmost boundaries of the universe and the limits of time and space. The Church adds further endowments by which the scientist may also become a saint and thus exert an influence in eternity itself. We need saints who are scientists, like Albertus Magnus; saints who are ministers of state like Thomas More; saints who will bring the energies of grace into our mechanical and republican age, as once St. Francis did to an agrarian age and St. Louis did to an age of monarchy."

SEVEN STEPS FROM THE BAR

Jocose,
Verbose,
Bellicose,
Lachrymose,
Morose,
Comatose,
Adios!

Robert Dougherty in
The American Legion

Why Use a Liturgical Language?

Here are some reasons against the use of the language of the people in the official services of the Church.

Clement C. Englert, C.S.S.R.

A TOPIC that is being discussed ever more frequently nowadays is that of using the vernacular or spoken language of the people in the liturgy of the Mass. Arguments are proposed pro and con. Some of the arguments seem to ignore reality very badly. The sponsors of the vernacular seem to be unaware of the serious problems involved. On the other hand some sponsors of the liturgical language care only for the preservation of an existing situation that they themselves find comfortable. Perhaps it will be useful to mention some of the arguments and evaluate them.

The vernacularists propose two great arguments: first, the people understand their own language; secondly, there is the tradition of the early Church for the use of the people's language.

Regarding the first: the people understand their own language. It seems to this writer that until there is a new assignment of lessons from

Sacred Scripture for many of the Sundays of the Roman liturgical year, the people will hardly be enlightened simply by hearing the lessons in English. (Let us use English as the sample vernacular for the sake of illustration).

You may say: it is the function of the priest to explain the liturgical texts. Agreed; but how often is there time, in the fifteen minutes at most available in many or most places, to explain epistles or gospels that would require at least an hour of elucidation if taken verse by verse? To what extent are our people attuned to scriptural language that they will appreciate even the psalm-verses that constitute most texts of the choral parts of the Mass (introit, gradual, offertory and communion verses) even if they heard them in English?

THE Roman orations are models of magnificent Latinity and fine prayer; even if they were well trans-

lated, would the multitude appreciate their sense, since, following the genius of classical Latin, they are often miraculously compact in thought and expression? Would not exactly those members of the congregation who are capable of understanding the sacred texts in the vernacular be also the ones who have the energy and the intelligence to read them in a vernacular missal?

Regarding the second argument of early tradition for the vernacular: it is true that for about three centuries the liturgy was celebrated at Rome in Greek, the common tongue of the Mediterranean world at the beginning of the Christian era. But when Greek became the language of only a minority at Rome, the liturgy was translated into Latin, the people's tongue. This argument for tradition is valid; but might one not argue also that the sixteen hundred years' usage of Latin since then has established another tradition, and that so long a retention of a language purely liturgical could hardly have happened without the guidance of the Holy Spirit?

Although the ancient tradition is truly for the vernacular, a powerful feeling has developed in the Church, both in the East and in the West, for a liturgical or hieratic language which by its very sound sets it apart as possessing a dignity and majesty reserved for God. It follows the instinct of using special church architecture and music and vestments and incense in raising the senses above everyday tawdriness and routine. It

is amazing how many simple people appreciate the sacred sonority of the Latin liturgical language, while supposedly educated people do not.

ONE truth which underlies the Church's complacency about letting Latin stand as the liturgical language in the Roman Rite is this: the *prime* purpose of the Mass is not to provide instruction and spiritual entertainment for the people, but to offer to God the worship He Himself wants from us. He gave us the Eucharistic sacrifice so that we might have adequate means of worship. Therefore, it is the celebration of Mass that matters; our worship is theocratic and not primarily for the people; it does not matter what language is used; God understands all of them, including the beautiful Latin.

But as long as God understands all languages, why not use all? Perhaps that will happen some day, but for the present there are great difficulties of a practical nature that must first be overcome.

For example: all peoples, great and small, are equal in the sight of the Holy See, and whatever privileges or concessions are granted to one should be granted to all. If we can have our Mass in English in America, then the Eskimos can have theirs in Esquimaux; the Fiji-Islanders can use Malay; every African tribe may have its own dialect too. Has any one figured out who will pay for the publication of the liturgical books in the hundreds of languages spoken by the Catholics of the world using the Roman Rite? Surely, there would be

an adequate market for English, French, German, Spanish and Italian books. But what about Norwegian, Swedish, Danish, Finnish — to mention but a few vernaculars used by very small Catholic communities?

MOREOVER, even though the great civilized languages like English would be capable of giving an adequate and even elegant rendering of the Latin original, what about the backward and undeveloped languages of primitive tribes? Admittedly, the thoughts of the liturgical prayers could be rendered, but would not often the Roman orations, with their terse classical and abstract phrases, have to be expressed in long paraphrases? Has it not constantly been the experience of the missionaries with primitive peoples that they had to impart wholesale from their own language into the primitive tongue most of our Catholic religious terminology?

Most people who have ever had the opportunity of hearing Gregorian chant well done, as well as some of the great classics of religious music to be found in Roman polyphony, would genuinely mourn the loss of these artistic treasures couched in the Latin tongue. Could they not be translated? Some can be done well in English, especially the simple chants, as the Anglicans have proved. But what about the huge bulk of the Church's music? And the cost of publication?

As things stand now in our gigantic parishes in America, Mass has to be celebrated many times on Sun-

day to accommodate the multitudes. Most large churches have Mass every hour. To read even a minimum of announcements, the gospel (and epistle), perhaps a letter from the chancery, and preach a short sermon, the priest must read the liturgical texts with fair speed in order to finish in forty-five to fifty minutes, especially if he must also distribute Holy Communion. God understands the duress compelling the priest to hurry; but if that speed were made evident by a vernacular liturgy, the results would be scandalous. Moreover, granted sufficient time and a beautiful vernacular translation, would the resultant liturgy be edifying if the priest were not an excellent elocutionist? One need only listen to the familiar vernacular prayers after low Mass to get an idea of how the whole might sound.

THE use of Latin throughout the Roman Rite makes for very edifying unity; many travellers have experienced the great comfort of attending Mass in foreign lands and hearing the familiar though mysterious Latin language. And a great advantage of the dead liturgical language is that it cannot change its meaning from generation to generation. Vernaculars would need periodic revision.

It is argued that the Eastern Rites use vernaculars. As a blanket statement that is incorrect. The great majority of Eastern Rite worshippers use a liturgical language — classic Greek, ancient Slavonic, old classic Armenian, etc. It is true that these are much more intelligible to their

peoples than Latin is to us; but they are by no means vernaculars, and people in the East have developed an attachment to the liturgical language. Thus when the Czar granted permission early in the twentieth century to use Russian in the liturgy, the vast majority of the people wanted to retain the ancient Slavonic and did so.

THE present writer does not contend that any of these arguments advanced for Latin are final, nor that the difficulties are insuperable. Some day they may all be overcome. All he contends is that these difficulties *exist* and must be faced. As things stand now, there seem to be overwhelmingly more arguments for retaining Latin than for changing to the vernacular. In the meantime numerous translations are available in English, especially in the form of the popular leaflet-missals for each Sunday that can be procured at minimal cost. Moreover, our children should be taught something about the meaning of the repeated Latin phrases of the Mass. Nor is this asking too much. We must reach up to grow.

In Germany and in Korea, while the priest celebrates at the altar in Latin, a trained reader (or another priest) reads some of the text in the vernacular. In Germany fine hymns are also sung that refer to the part of the Mass taking place. The Holy Father praises this system in his encyclical on sacred music.

It has always been a source of edifying wonderment to the present writer to find that our simplest and

most pious people have no desire to hear their liturgy in English. "No, Father," they say, "English would make it too much of an everyday affair. In Latin it is very sacred and sounds worthy of God!"

Protagonists of the vernacular say that it would hold our young people faithful to their obligations of church attendance. A Catholic priest, who is a converted Episcopalian minister, answered that question recently in *The Priest* magazine. He says that the Anglicans have developed a beautiful vernacular liturgy, and the High Church party has all the Catholic externals as well. Has the English service held their young people? He says it has not. Or take the example of Norway and Sweden, where the Reformation succeeded only by retaining Catholic vestments and Mass-form in the Lutheran communion service. Has the vernacular held the congregations in those countries? Dr. Sergius Bulgakoff, on a recent visit to the churches of Scandinavia, remarks about their beauty of setting and dignified services of Catholic pattern in the vernacular, and also declares that regular church attendance is so poor as to be almost nonexistent.

IT IS doubtful whether the use of Latin keeps people away; it is doubtful whether using the vernacular would bring lapsed Catholics back. Anyone who wants to know what is going on at the altar may do so by looking at his missal. Admittedly, this takes an effort, but are we to encourage lack of effort in our peo-

ple? Everything worthwhile in life requires effort. And if we had a vernacular language, I fear that we would have just as many individuals as now that read prayer books during sermons, and stumble about lighting votive lamps even during the most eloquent sermon.

The statement is sometimes made by the vernacularists, that the only reason the Church held on to Latin is that the Protestants used the vernacular. That is not the *only* reason. By the sixteenth century, the instinct for a sacred language had had thirteen hundred years to develop. And the greatest of the reformers, Martin Luther, absorbed and retained that feeling. When Melancthon and some of his other zealous aides began insisting on the use of German only as

a badge of Protestantism, Luther protested, and said that Latin was by no means to be abolished entirely. He said that as long as he lived he wanted to hear the Sanctus, Benedictus and Agnus Dei sung in Latin! That is why for a long time German Lutheran churches could hear such apparent anomalies as a Latin Magnificat or Te Deum sung within their walls. That is why a great Lutheran composer like Bach is the author of Latin church music.

Though the Eastern Churches have in general showed more tendency to favor national tongues, the instinct for a sacred liturgical language is by no means wanting among them and accounts for the attachment of the majority to the old and changeless forms now in use.



MERRY CHRISTMAS!

To a Foreign Missionary

You carry Him who came this holy morn
To lands in which His name is yet unknown;
As He had few to greet Him newly born,
So you will seem forgotten and alone.



Let not the futile labors and the ache
Of unrequited sacrifices dim
Remembrance that few converts did He make
Until abandonment was borne by Him.



On future Christmases new throngs will give
Love, adoration, to this King of men
Because you chose for their lost souls to live
His lonely, unbeloved years again.

D.F.M.

For Wives and Husbands Only

Purity in Marriage

Donald F. Miller, C.S.S.R.

Problem: We often see references made to "purity in marriage," or to "sins against purity" committed by married people. When we were married we received no instructions about these matters, but we were under the impression that the use of sex is lawful and even virtuous for married people. We don't want to offend God, and so we are anxious to know what these sins against purity in marriage are.

Solution: The general principle is that the use of sex is lawful and virtuous for married people so long as its use is in accordance with the purposes for which God created the powers and pleasures of sex in human beings. There are several ways in which it is possible for married people to violate the sixth commandment and the virtue of purity.

1) The first is by any sin of infidelity. Married people have vowed before God that they would reserve for each other, until death separates them, their conjugal affection and the right to their bodies for the actions necessary for the procreation of children. Therefore making love to another person, keeping company with another person, above all, by indulgence in sexual relations or actions that lead to sexual relations with another person, are seriously forbidden to the married.

2) The second is by contraception in any form. It is the law of nature and the law of God that the marriage act when indulged in by a husband and wife must always be an act that is apt or designed for procreation, even though by reason of

advanced age or sterility or some other circumstances, it happens to be known in a particular case that conception will not result from the act. It is a mortal sin for married people deliberately to make the marriage act un-apt for procreation by contraception, whether by deliberate withdrawal or the use of instruments or medications. They may use their privilege more often than is necessary for conception; they may use it even when they know conception cannot follow; but they are forbidden by God's law to distort the act and make it un-apt for procreation.

3) The third is by any form of deliberate self-abuse. The pleasures of sex are intended by God as a reward and incentive for the married in using their privileges as a possible means to conception. Like the un-married, they are forbidden to seek or to consent to these pleasures alone.

IT MAY be added that married people can also fail in regard to their marriage relationship by refusing to live up to the contract they made on the day of their marriage. By that contract they promised to consent to the privileges of marriage whenever they would reasonably and seriously be asked to do so by their partner. A single refusal, with no valid reason for it, when the request of a partner is serious and reasonable, would be a mortal sin, to say nothing of habitual refusal over a period of time. This sin, however, would not be a sin against purity but a sin against the virtue of justice because it constitutes a breach of the marriage contract.

SIDEGLANCES

By the Bystander

Lesson in
Straight Thinking

A READER has sent us an interesting tract put out by the Concordia (Lutheran) publishing house of St. Louis, in which Martin Luther and his reformation are credited with giving ten great Christian blessings to the world, all of which are said to have been denied to the world by the Catholic Church.

The Christmas season is a good time for Catholics (and interested Protestants) to look closely at some of these claims. We say "some," because obviously a volume could be filled if one purported to discuss all the points brought up in a thorough and scholarly manner. For example, the glib claims that Luther was the founder of the principle of universal popular education and of civil and religious liberty, should not be brushed off with a simple denial, or even the statement of a few isolated facts. To treat these matters adequately one should have to study Luther's life and writings, the effects of his teaching, the circumstances in

which he lived, against the background of the official teaching of the Catholic Church on these complicated subjects.

Nevertheless there is an opportunity for every Catholic to test his knowledge of his own faith by asking himself what he would say (to himself or to others) in answer to some of the more doctrinal principles of Luther that the writer of the tract in hand considers a complete refutation of the claims of the Catholic Church. There are five such strictly doctrinal principles set down in the tract. Can you answer them?

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THE first is what the author calls Luther's *comforting doctrine of justification by grace through faith in Christ, without the works of the Law*. In opposition to this principle, says the tract-writer, the Catholic Church teaches salvation by works. What do you say to this? First of all, does the Catholic Church teach that salvation can be attained through good works alone, as op-

posed to salvation by faith? Absolutely not. Nobody can be a Catholic without believing that faith in Christ is the beginning of justification, that nobody's good works can save him unless he have faith in the divinity and redemption of Jesus Christ. But the Catholic Church maintains with the Bible and many of the exact statements of Christ Himself, that, having been justified through faith, a man must keep the commandments to be saved, in short that, as St. James says, "Faith without works is dead."

What, then, did St. Paul mean when he said, as quoted by our tract-writer and often before him by Luther, that "by grace ye are saved, through faith, and not by yourselves: it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast?" He meant, as Christ Himself made clear on many an occasion, that you cannot be saved by being a Pharisee or a hypocrite, that is, by performing many external rites and ceremonies, while inwardly your heart remains unconverted to God. A Catholic therefore says: "I am saved by God's grace, which enables me to believe in Christ and to keep His commandments. But I am still free not to use grace and to disobey Christ's commandments, and if I choose to do so, I am lost."

THE second "blessing" Luther is said to have contributed to the world is the doctrine that *the Holy Bible is the only source*

and rule of faith and life. This, the tract-writer says, freed religions from the "doctrines and commandments of men," which the Catholic Church had been imposing through the pope and the Church councils. What do you say to that? If you know your Bible at all, you will immediately recall that Christ imposed a strict obligation on certain chosen men "to teach all nations," and that never, anywhere in the Bible, did He impose on all men the obligation of taking their religion from the Bible alone. "Going therefore teach all nations whatsoever I have commanded you. . . . He that heareth you heareth Me. . . . Whatsoever you bind on earth it is bound in heaven."

Thus the Bible itself refutes the claim of its misinterpreters that the Bible alone was meant by Christ to do all the teaching. Moreover, the frightful outcropping of innumerable religious sects and splinter-sects since Luther invented his new principle reflects the wisdom of Christ in entrusting His doctrine to an authorized body of men rather than to a book of over a thousand pages.

A THIRD of Luther's so-called great contributions to the world is his doctrine of *the universal priesthood of all believers.* He bases this on St. Peter's words, "Ye are . . . a royal priesthood," and the tract-writer adds that this

marks the death-knell of the special priesthood of the Catholic Church. What can you say, as a Catholic, in answer to this? First of all, a little wonderment comes over you as to why nobody seemed to notice those words of St. Peter in the Bible for 1500 years before Luther came along, and to make them the basis for destroying the Catholic priesthood.

A little further study will reveal that the words were indeed noticed, and were used often in the liturgy of Catholic services. But without much study, anyone who knows the Bible will recall two things: one is that Christ indubitably imparted to certain men powers that He did not give to others, namely, the authority to teach, the power to bind and loose, and the mandate to feed His flock with spiritual food. They in turn handed down these powers to others, as is evident in St. Paul's words to one of the priests whom he ordained: "I urge you to stir up the grace of God which is in you by the imposition of my hands."

The second point that will be recalled is the context of St. Peter's words about the "priesthood" of the faithful. In the very same sentence he calls all the believers in Christ "kings." Obviously not in the primary sense of the word "king," but in a more or less transferred or metaphorical sense. It is in that sense that he applies the word "priest" to every believ-

ing Christian, without in the least denying or nullifying the many other words Christ had spoken to establish a special priesthood among men.

A FOURTH principle said by our tract-writer to have been a great contribution on the part of Luther to Christianity is that of *the Christian's right of private judgment*. In a neat twist of words, the author says that this does not mean that any person can explain the Bible as it suits his fancy; it only means that he must not accept the explanation of the Bible as given by the Roman Catholic Church. Then he adds that, after all, the Bible explains itself; anybody can find the true explanation of a difficult passage of one part of the Bible, in a single passage of another part of the Bible. What, as a Catholic, would you answer to that?

First of all, you answer that, if this were true, then everybody in the world who reads the Bible with faith would arrive at exactly the same understanding of all its teachings. As a matter of fact, however, there are a thousand different interpretations of many passages of the Bible among those who adopt the principle of private judgment.

Secondly, you answer that it was not private judgment that established what the Bible is, that is, what books rightly belong to the Bible; it was the authority of the Catholic Church. So Luther

accepted the authority of the Catholic Church as to what constitutes the Bible (making a few changes that seemed expedient to him, but, in general, taking the Bible from the Church) and then he told his followers not to listen to that same authority when it came to explaining difficult passages of the Bible.

Thirdly, you find, by a little observation, that the followers of Luther, and all Protestants in general, are prone to violate the very principle set down by the tract-writer, namely, that a difficult passage of the Bible must be explained by simple passages in other parts of the Bible. For example, the passage of St. Paul, "Ye are saved by . . . faith, not by the works of the Law," certainly must be explained in accord with all our Lord's teaching about the importance of keeping the commandments, about the horror of sin, about the terrible judgment every soul will undergo at death *according to his works*. Luther and his followers isolated that one passage about "faith and not works," and thus actually changed the teaching of Christ.

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A FIFTH so-called blessing of Luther's teaching is said by the tract-writer to be *the truly evangelical and Biblical conception of marriage, the home and the Christian life in general*. Luther is credited with the glorious achievement of destroying in

the minds of men the value of celibacy and virginity as a way of dedicating oneself entirely to God. To make this look important, the tract-writer makes the false statement that, because celibacy was honored in the Catholic Church, the work of fathers and mothers was despised. This is almost too apt a way of explaining why Luther broke his own vow of celibacy, fell in love with and married a nun who also broke her vow of celibacy, and begot children by her.

But that is not the point that, as a Catholic, you should stress in answering this statement of Lutheran principle. The point to be stressed is that it was not any pope or bishop or group of Roman Catholic scholars who set up virginity as a state most pleasing to God. It was the Bible itself, especially in the clear words of St. Paul. "He that giveth his daughter not in marriage doth better. . . . Because she that hath not a husband is . . . concerned with the things of God." At the very same time St. Paul praised marriage and paid homage to the work of fathers and mothers. Thus the sincere seeker after truth has a choice in this matter between accepting Luther's teaching and example, and the clear words of the Bible itself, in a passage that offers no difficulty whatsoever to the understanding.

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CHRISTMAS will have more meaning for every sincere

Christian who looks carefully at such historic contradictions of Christian doctrine as are outlined above. We all learn many things by studying opposites; we become firmer in our convictions of the truth by becoming more aware of the errors that we must avoid; above all, we become more loyal to Christ and more sure of our salvation, the more we make certain that we are in the mainstream of teaching and doctrine that has flowed down undammed and undiverted through the Catholic Church, since the time of Christ, 1900 years ago.

The right temperature in the home is maintained by warm hearts, not by hot heads.

Arcadia News Leader



How foolish it is to seek God in the strange and spectacular. Rather he is to be found in common, ordinary things. When God became Man, He chose for His Mother a quiet, unknown woman; His birthplace was not a palace but a cave. During His life He walked and talked with ordinary people. He chose fishermen as His companions. He did not dine with Herod, but in the homes of common people. He was crucified between two thieves. He can be found where the unspiritual least expect to find Him—in common things.

From "Walking With God"
(McMullen)

TAKE TIME

- Take time to work—it is the price of success.
- Take time to think—it is the source of power.
- Take time to play—it is the secret of youth.
- Take time to read—it is the foundation of wisdom.
- Take time to laugh—it is the music of the soul.
- Take time to be friendly—it is the road to happiness.
- Take time to dream—it is the highway to the stars.
- Take time to look around—it is a short cut to unselfishness.
- Take time to pray—it is the way to heaven.

Veteran's Aid News

BETTER THAN SERMONS

When next you notice *amps* or *amperes* on the dashboard of a car, remember this story, states *The Majellan*.

When Frederick Ozanam, the founder of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, was eighteen, he had great temptations against the faith. One day, in great agony of soul, he entered a church in Paris. Hidden away in a corner, he saw an old man devoutly reciting his rosary. Moved by curiosity, he went over and knelt behind him. The old man was the scientist Ampere, of whom the whole world was talking.

The sight of such faith touched Ozanam deeply. Suddenly prayers and tears welled up in his heart. It was a complete victory over his temptations. "The rosary of Ampere," said Ozanam afterwards, "did more for me than all books and sermons put together."

Pre-Marriage CLINIC

On Falling Back into the Same Sins

Donald F. Miller, C.S.S.R.

PROBLEM: Recently I made a mission given by the Redemptorist Fathers during which the missionaries kept urging the people to get to confession, but also stressed the point that if they were not willing to give up their mortal sins, they should not go to confession. It happens that I am going with a wonderful young man and for very good reasons we cannot get married for some time. We fall into sin quite often, but neither of us wants to give up confession and Holy Communion. All this insistence on giving up all sins forever has frightened us both away from confession and Communion, and even when we go to confession, we feel unworthy of receiving Communion. I know it has had the same effect on others. Is not this putting too much fear into religion and forgetting Christ's mercy and love?

SOLUTION: There are three possible mistaken notions or attitudes behind the statement of this problem. The first is the wrong notion that priests, whether pastors or missionaries, should soft-pedal the necessity of real sorrow for sin and sincere determination to avoid sin in the future, for a good confession. This is out of the question. If a Catholic couple in love cannot get together before confession and agree that they will give up sins against purity, that they will avoid the occasions of these sins, such as petting, lonely meetings, etc., they certainly do not have a firm purpose of amendment. Not even God can forgive a sin while the sinner is actually planning on committing the sin again.

The second mistaken attitude behind this problem is that of lack of confidence in the power of God's grace and the use of prudent means to make the avoidance of sin possible and even easy. The person writes as if there is just no chance of avoiding the sins being committed. Yet thousands of persons in love have faced the same temptations and, by frequent Communion, by avoiding needless occasions of and incentives to sin, have remained pure. All such have to start with the conviction that it can be done and it will be done at any cost.

THE third possible wrong notion is that, for a good confession and a good act of contrition, one has to be infallibly sure that one will never again fall into sin. It is very true that, at the time of confession, one must be determined to suffer anything rather than commit the same sins again, and intelligently ready to use every necessary practical means to avoid those sins. In the case of two Catholics falling into sin together, they can have the added force of a determination to help each other keep their resolve. If at some future date they fall into sin again, this does not necessarily mean that their past confession was bad; it only means that they foolishly stopped using the means they had promised so fervently to use. Of course there would be evidence of self-deception and insincerity if, despite tears of sorrow, they went right back into the same old occasions, or if they made no progress in virtue from confession to confession.



readers retort

In which readers are invited to express their minds on articles and opinions published in *The Liguorian*. Letters must be signed and full address of the writer must be given, though city and name will be withheld from publication on request.

The Single Life

"I want you to know that I particularly enjoyed your article in the July issue about teen-agers and the single life. I hope that because of it some people have changed their opinion that single women are single only because they are 'abnormal' and 'can't get a man.' Believe me, there can be a lot of things worse than being single. I fall into the category of caring for an aged parent. However, I would like to point out that this can be a pleasure rather than a burden if the son or daughter treats the parent like a human being rather than an odd piece of furniture to be relegated to the attic. My mother and I have lived together for fifteen years in perfect harmony. I've had steady work, success in my job, and we have both had reasonably good health. My married brothers and sisters are all much better off financially than I am, but none are happier. If this is God's way for me to do His work on earth, then He has a perfectly satisfied employee.

N. N.

N. N."

The Married Life

"With a family of five children, all under ten years of age, I sometimes feel overburdened and pray for no future pregnancies. But after reading some readers' retorts on birth control, etc., I feel that I'll accept any more children that

our dear Lord wants to give us. It is so hard to raise children these days when they want everything that their friends have but what we cannot afford. Also to clothe and feed them, pay their doctor and dentist bills. Sometimes I feel as though we are in a tight corner and there is no escape. But our dear Lord and our Blessed Mother always come to the rescue. Things always seem to ease up just when I think that we simply cannot go on. It makes me 'boil' to read some of the letters and to feel that these persons just don't want to hear the facts and what is right and wrong, because it makes living in this world too much of a burden for them.

Minneapolis, Minn.

Mrs. R. N."

Just a Year and a Half

"I am twenty-one years old. I feel that if in the past year and a half I have come to know and understand my religion more fully, it is through reading your magazine. I wish that I had been fortunate enough to discover it when I was in high school. I remember that time as a period of great indifference towards Catholicism. I think your articles for teen-agers are one of the best features of your magazine. There is so little published today to guide teen-agers morally and spiritually, especially if they are students in a public high school as I was. Please

carry on despite protests from horrified mothers that you are corrupting their darlings. Frankly, these mothers must not realize the influence these 'innocent little minds' are being subjected to.

Fall River, Mass.

J. P."

Money Too!

"I am sorry that I must disagree with you right at the start of my acquaintance with THE LIGUORIAN. I refer to what you had to say in the article, *Marriage and Money*, about married women taking jobs outside the home. Yesterday I baked a dozen blueberry muffins and a fresh peach pie. My family has refused 'politely' to eat them. So when the children go back to school, 8:30 to 3:00, guess where I'm going to be a couple of days a week between those hours. Back in an office, where my efforts are appreciated. And I'll have money, too!

New Jersey

N. N."

• *We do not find much disagreement in this letter with the article mentioned. We said, "The important point is that a wife must never . . . evade the duty of raising her family properly for the sake of extra luxuries that can be acquired only by her taking a job." If a wife and mother can work a few hours a day, outside the home, a "couple" of days a week and still make her home attractive and "wanted" by her family and at the same time fulfill her obligations to husband and children, it would seem that she is not at fault. In this particular case we cannot help being just a bit curious about the strange chain of circumstances that may have led up to the polite refusal on the part of the family to eat the muffins and the peach pie.*

The editors

A Life Alone

"Your recent issues with the articles on divorced Catholics were a wonderful help to me, for I, too, am a divorced

Catholic, who with God's grace and someone's prayer had the opportunity to return to God and the sacraments. It was not easy to choose between a man whom I loved and God. Yet what on this earth can take the place of God when He shows us His love? Still, I suppose, it is human nature that makes some of us want God but at the same time want sin — sin in this case being marriage out of the Church. So many of my friends and acquaintances — both young and old — are in that same predicament. That is why I am asking you to send three copies of the September issue. Perhaps with God's help and our prayers they will return to the Church even if it means a life alone.

Florida

Mrs. R. E. F."

A Word about the Devil

"I would like to comment on the letter from a divorced Catholic in the September issue which said: 'My second marriage is successful beyond belief; few couples achieve the perfect harmony and understanding and love which we have found.' Without direct reference to this particular re-marriage after divorce I should like to say that I am not at all surprised that a good number of divorced Catholics find their second try at marriage turning out like that. Having observed a number of invalid marriages, I have noticed this odd fact: that often they are 'unusually harmonious.' But why should this be true? It is not such a difficult riddle to solve if the wiles of the devil are taken into consideration. The last thing the devil wants is for an adulterous couple to separate, so he, who usually perpetrates as much dissension and misunderstanding as he possibly can, in a valid marriage, will try in every way to promote harmony in an invalid union. The more pleasing a marriage is to God, the more jealous and infuriated the devil is, and he will use every trick in the box

to disturb the peace of it. The husband will not be able at times to see the 'rare moral strength and inner beauty' of his wife because the devil will be holding a magnifying glass over her faults. And conversely, the devil will hold the same magnifying glass over the virtues of the invalid partner, while he prompts: 'You cannot leave this wonderful person; the Church must be wrong.' And heaven help them who are so deceived and ensnared! Let us pray for them.

Minnesota

M. N."

Our Cover Change

"I would like to comment favorably on your change in format, especially the different cover each month. I like the variety of different designs because my husband picks one up from the coffee table occasionally. He is not a Catholic, and I think a person such as he would be more inclined to look at a magazine with a different look each month than one which is consistently religious and the same in appearance each month.

Alexandria, La.

J. K."

Negative

"Here is one vote in favor of returning to the old cover on THE LIGUORIAN (the 1954-55 style with the articles listed black on white in big type). I can't sell more than three copies a month on my pamphlet rack! The new cover doesn't attract.

Massachusetts

Father F. C."

What Is Success?

"I wonder when THE LIGUORIAN is going to comment about the many recent magazine articles dealing with "success?" It seems to be obsolete for a man to work in order to support his family. Now his main interest is supposed to be 'getting ahead.' The family comes in a poor second and the wife is encouraged

to aid and abet this by not bothering him with the raising of the children and lesser domestic matters. The family exists for the job and not the job for the family. Men are supposed to take part in all sorts of evening activities in order to gain the approval of their companies — from weekly bowling through technical society and civic meetings. But what does it profit a man to attend a meeting concerned, for instance, with juvenile delinquency, if his going to the meeting deprives his own children of his companionship? My own husband has steadfastly resisted this trend. He is not incapable of success, but says it is not worth such a price. Isn't the whole business just as insidious as placing the state before the family?

Baltimore, Md.

Mrs. N. K. W."

• While THE LIGUORIAN may not have published in the past an article dealing specifically with this "success" problem as outlined in the above letter, we have had many articles which were pointed in that direction. In fact, we believe that the major portion of the reading matter in THE LIGUORIAN in some way or other is constantly repeating the truth, "What will it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his soul?" But the point in the above letter is well made, and we shall list the suggestion on our program together with the many, many other requests we have received for articles on a particular point or problem.

The editors

"Why Don't You Get Married?"

"I am one of many single girls (a few years past the usual marrying age) who is constantly asked by married relatives and friends, "Why don't you marry, settle down and raise a family?" I am working, going to a Catholic college and feel that there is plenty of my life left to spend in the blessed state of matrimony. I have even been told that

getting a college degree is far less important than raising a good Catholic family. I would be the first to admit that the latter is one of my very hopeful intentions in life, but after all, there are other goals. It appears, from reading articles from THE LIGUORIAN and other Catholic periodicals, that probably some of the same couples who are constantly nagging single people might be persons practicing birth control. Is this what they are selling? Maybe I am, at the present, putting education first; but at least when the time comes for me to marry, we shall be more than happy to accept as many children as God will grant us and are not so likely to fall into such a sad state as mentioned above. Not only will a more mature couple be ready to accept the responsibilities and duties that come with marriage but they will be better equipped to give their children all they deserve — morally, physically and financially. I don't mean to cast any reflection on the many married couples who are perfect examples for us to follow, but it would prove considerate on the part of all to reflect on what I have written before they ask the next single person they meet: "Why don't you get married?"

Chicago, Ill.

N. M."

Keep Hammering at It!

"I think THE LIGUORIAN is probably the best magazine ever published. The READERS RETORT department gives one a good idea of how people think. I am shocked at the way some people react to your statement of doctrine and principles when deep down they really know that they are wrong. Again it helps a person, when reading such wild statements, to be grateful that the grace of God has kept one on the right path and to resolve to be a still better Catholic. I am assistant dean of boys in a chil-

dren's home, and I know what we have to do for children and teen-agers. Sometimes I think I am not accomplishing much, but I try not to give up. So, too, it must be difficult and discouraging for you to receive some of the letters you get, but think of the thousands you have helped and encouraged. I am sure God is very pleased with your work as well. If you don't come to the point in this day and keep hammering at it, a lot of people will follow the line of least resistance and do nothing about their religion.

Davenport, Ia.

M.W.T."

Kind Words

"We have approximately fifteen magazines coming into our home each month — both Catholic and secular. Yours is the hardest one to get hold of because it's the only one the whole family reads and reads thoroughly. I have recommended it very highly to my friends. A friend of mine recently became a Catholic. I am enclosing a subscription for him because I feel that the best way for him to know and love the Catholic religion as I do is through THE LIGUORIAN.

Flint, Mich.

J. M. M."

"Here are the reasons why I read your magazine: 1. It is concise; it does not carry its articles to the back of the magazine. 2. It is good reading for teen-agers, answering questions that are subconsciously wondered about. 3. You call a 'spade a spade' in such a way that your meaning is clearly understood. 4. This reason I imagine, is new. It is the only magazine my infant will let me hold while nursing him. The paper is soft and the magazine can be held in one hand by turning it back to back without destroying the binding.

Red Bank, N. J.

Mrs. M. S. R."

THE LIGUORIAN

The Scapular Promises

In the November issue we published the story of the origin of the five scapulars. Here is a summary of the promises made to those who wear the five scapulars and of the rules which govern this practice.

WHAT are the *promises* that heaven has made for wearing the five scapulars? Implicitly, there is a very real promise with each of them. When our Lord or His mother appeared with the individual religious habits, they were as much as saying: "Wear this for Me, and I will love you."

Explicitly, however, not every one of the five has a specific promise. There is none (at least as far as this writer has found) in so many words for the white or for the black. For the blue, our Lord promised "great favors" for the wearers "and *others*," no doubt for those near and dear to the wearers; He also seems to have promised special power to their prayers for the conversion of sinners. For the red, He promised "a great increase of faith, hope and charity on every Friday."

The promises of the brown scapular of Mount Carmel are the most famous. To St. Simon Stock, the Blessed Virgin promised that its wearers would escape hell; to Pope John XXII she promised that she would free them from purgatory on the Saturday after their death. This latter *Sabbatine* promise has been the object of a vast amount of controversy. The main point of the controversy was settled by the Church many years ago, when Pope Paul V issued a decree on January 20, 1613:

"IT is lawful for the Carmelites to preach that the faithful may piously believe in the assistance promised to the brethren themselves and also to the members of the Confraternity of Mount Carmel, namely, that the Blessed Virgin will assist by her continual intercession, suffrages and merits, and also by her special protection, particularly on the Saturday after their death, the souls of those brethren and members of the Confraternity who depart this life in charity and whilst living on earth have worn the habit, observed chastity according to their state in life, etc."

We shall discuss the other conditions when speaking of the *obligations* of the brown scapular.

Besides *getting* things for wearing the scapular, however, we are also empowered to *do* things. The scapular is not a good luck charm. The wearer is not supposed to be completely passive about it. Rather, it is to inspire him to do things for God and for souls. This is one of the benefits.

Wearing the white scapular is a way of sharing in the works, merits and power of the Trinitarian Fathers, who saved 90,000 Christian slaves from behind the iron curtain of days gone by. The modern wearer of the white scapular and member of the Confraternity of the Most Holy Trinity, is sharing in those merits; is drawing upon them in his own prayers and good works in the work of bringing relief and perhaps even deliverance to the thousands of slaves behind the iron curtain of our own day.

Similarly, the wearing of the black scapular in honor of the Mother of Sorrows is a good work calculated to bring down the favor of that Mother on all the mothers and all the loved ones bereaved by war or persecution or exile in our own day.

OUR Lady at Fatima revealed to the children that devotion to her Immaculate Heart is the way to world peace and the conversion of Russia. The blue scapular of the Immaculate Conception offers a way of practicing that devotion; also the red, which, besides being the scap-

ular of the Passion, is also that of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary. And in her final great apparition at Fatima, Mary took the appearance of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, according to the accounts of the children.

Now for the *obligations* of the five scapulars: what must the scapulars themselves be made of? what about the enrolling and the wearing (with something about the *scapular medal*)? and the prayers or devotions that have to be performed?

The scapulars must be of *wool*; there must be two sets of the five, joined with red strings. They must be worn around the neck, one set on the breast, the other on the back. It is *not* required that the red cord be attached to each of the five scapulars. They may be wrapped in cellophane or other transparent material, as long as the blue and red cross on the white scapular remains visible.

In particular, the requirements for the *white* scapular are that it have a blue and red cross sewed onto the *front* piece of the two parts of the scapular. On the back piece, there need be nothing; and sometimes it is reduced to half size. For the cross, the up and down beam must be *red*, and the one across must be the *blue*. The white scapular must be the first or last among the five, for the reason that the cross upon it must be visible.

THERE is no special legislation about the make-up of the black, blue and brown scapulars, except that they must be woollen. They may have an image of the Blessed Virgin

upon them, but this is not necessary. The scapular of Our Lady of Mount Carmel may also be colored black instead of brown; though among the five it will always be brown to distinguish it from the black one of the Sorrowful Mother.

The red, however, is very special. On one of the two pieces it must have an image of our Lord on the cross with the prayer: "Holy Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, save us!" On the other piece there must be an image of the hearts of Jesus and Mary, with the prayer: "Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, protect us!"

In order to share in the benefits of the five scapulars, two things are always essential: 1) one must be *enrolled* in each of them by a priest having the power; and 2) one must *wear* the scapulars (or the scapular medal).

About the enrolling: most priests nowadays have the power to enroll, or can obtain it fairly easily. Many priests have also the power to enroll in the scapulars *under a single formula*. This means that instead of having to place the five scapulars upon the person's shoulders five times, as they would otherwise have to do, a single imposing of the five will suffice, when accompanied of course with the proper prayers.

THIS is the manner of the enrolling when there is a large crowd to be enrolled: (There is no problem if it is only one or two.)

The priest having the proper faculties can use a single scapular to en-

roll them all. And it need not be a scapular belonging to anyone of the persons to be enrolled.

- 1) The priest blesses the scapular. If it is blessed already, that is, if he has used it before in an enrolling ceremony, he may omit the blessing.
- 2) Next, *before* imposing it upon anyone (not after), he recites the enrolling words: "Receive the habit of the Most Blessed Trinity . . ." "Receive the scapular of the Passion of Our Lord . . ." etc.
- 3) Then he does the actual imposing, by laying it for a moment on the shoulder (it need not be around the neck) of each person; and leaves it lying on the shoulder of the last one.
- 4) Finally he says the concluding prayers.

Some priests have a special privilege. If there are more than twenty persons to be enrolled, and each has his own scapular, they can impose it upon themselves at the proper time in the ceremony. But this will not usually be the case; most persons nowadays have not the scapular but the scapular medal.

Afterwards the name of each person enrolled must be taken down and sent in to some church where one of the four confraternities is established: of the Most Holy Trinity, of the Sorrowful Mother, of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, and of the Immaculate Conception. Redemptorists, however, are privileged to enroll in the

scapulars *without* the obligation of sending in the names.

AS to the actual *wearing* of the scapulars, they must be worn around the neck or carried on the person. If a scapular is lost or worn out, all that is necessary is to procure another one and put it on; no new blessing is required. If a person once enrolled has completely given up wearing it, but now wishes to take up the practice again, all he needs to do is to get a new one and put it on. No new blessing or enrolling is required. This is the case with the scapulars themselves. But if one procures a new medal, the medal must always be blessed.

And that brings us to the scapular medal. In 1910 Pope Pius X granted the privilege of wearing the scapular medal instead of the scapulars, declaring that thereby the wearer shared in all the blessings and benefits of the scapulars for which the medal had been blessed, "not excluding," he says with emphasis, "the Sabbatine privilege."

But note these things about the scapular medal:

1) The first enrolling must be in the scapular, not in the medal, except for persons in the armed forces, who may be enrolled directly with the medal.

2) The medal supplies for any and all scapulars *for which it is blessed*; that is, if the priest had faculties to enroll in the five scapulars, and blessed the medal properly, it carries all the privileges of the five. If he blesses it for still others, it carries their privileges too.

3) The priest in blessing the medal need only make the sign of the cross over the medal for each scapular. He need say no words; but he must keep each scapular distinct in his mind as he blesses. He can do so by repeating with each sign of the cross: "Red — White — Blue — etc."

4) How does a scapular medal look? It must have on one side an image of our Lady, any accepted representation of her whatever; and on the other, the image of our Lord *with His Heart showing*.

5) The scapular medal need not be worn around the neck, but may be carried anywhere on the person, or sewed in the clothes, (for example, in a bathing suit).

WE now come finally to the prayers that have to be said or good works done in order to gain the benefits of the scapulars.

For four of them, namely all but the brown, there is *nothing* imposed as of obligation. The only thing really obligatory is to be enrolled properly in the scapular and to wear it constantly.

But although not of obligation, there are certain prayers and intentions that are recognized as going with each of the scapulars in some way.

The *white* suggests prayers for slaves and displaced persons in the modern world. The *black* reminds the wearer to compassionate the Mother of God in her Sorrows. The *blue* is for devotion to Mary Immaculate, and a help to praying for the conversion of sinners. Wearing the *red* of the Sacred Heart and the Im-

maculate Heart reminds one of Our Lady of Fatima and her request for prayer and penance for peace in the world.

These obligations are comparatively easy. It is the *brown* scapular that has the special obligations. Not as regards our Lady's promise to St. Simon Stock, about saving the wearers from hell; that requires only the faithful wearing of the scapular. But to gain the Sabbatine privilege; to make sure of being freed from purgatory on the Saturday after our death (if not sooner); there we do have something special to do.

THE decree of Pope Paul V of January 20, 1613, which was partially quoted above, goes on to list these obligations of the Sabbatine privilege. It declares that we may believe that the Blessed Virgin will bring special help: especially on the Saturday after their death to the souls of those brethren and those members of the confraternity who depart this life in charity and who, whilst living, have worn the habit, observed chastity according to their state, and who shall have recited the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary, or, if they cannot read, shall have observed the fasts of the Church and shall have abstained from flesh meat on Wednesdays and Saturdays (unless the Feast of the Nativity of our Lord falls on that day).

Note that, besides wearing the brown scapular, this decree imposes *two* obligations, with a *substitute* offered for the second.

The first obligation is that of "chastity according to one's state."

This does not mean that the wearer of the brown scapular may not get married, but that married or single he must strive to avoid sins against chastity, and if he should fall into sin, must be prompt to repent.

The second is "reciting the little office of the Blessed Virgin." This is a very ancient Catholic devotion, consisting of a collection of hymns and psalms and prayers in honor of our Lady, modeled on the divine office which priests say every day; a kind of abbreviated breviary in honor of Mary. It must be said every day to gain the scapular promise. Those bound to say the regular divine office fulfill the obligation by that very exercise. Sisters who recite the new short breviary in English (as many are doing nowadays) would also seem to be fulfilling this obligation; at least, any priest who has faculties to enroll in the brown scapular can commute the obligation of the little office into this English office for them.

THE substitute for the second obligation in Paul V's decree is to "observe the fasts of the Church and abstain on Wednesdays and Saturdays." But very often in modern life even this substitute is practically impossible. So the Church, like a solicitous mother, has gone on to offer a substitute for the substitute. She has granted to every priest who has faculties to enroll in the brown scapular, the power to change or commute this fasting and abstaining into the performance of certain good works or the recitation of certain

prayers. Good works would be: periodic almsgiving; regular contributions to the missions; hearing Mass on weekdays; kissing the brown scapular daily with the prayer: "Our Lady of Mount Carmel, pray for us!" As to the prayers to be recited, various suggestions are made by writers on the subject. Some say it should be seven *Our Fathers* and *Hail Marys* every day; some would bring it down as low as one *Our Father*, one *Hail Mary*, and one *Glory be*, every day. The exact prayers will depend on the

judgment of the priest who does the commuting.

This, then, is the devotion of the five scapulars. In one way it seems easy, considering the magnitude of the benefits it offers. But to be faithful throughout life, in a conscious and deliberate way, to this *easy* exercise of wearing the little scapulars and fulfilling the other obligations is no little thing, and will surely bring the rewards that heaven has promised and Holy Mother Church has made her own by her approval.

The Christchild and Friends

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December 26

St. Stephen suffered broken bones
From his cruel persecutors' stones.

•

December 27

St. John was made to fear and foil
His jailors with their burning oil.

•

December 28

The Innocents of Bethlehem—
How Herod loosed his rage on them!

•

Which proves that all who love our Lord
Must be prepared for cross and sword;

Like Him, to suffer here on earth
That they might have a bright new birth

In heaven, for which all their pains
Will seem a very small exchange.

LGM

POINTED PARAGRAPHS

Pledge of the Legion

December is the month in which, in many parishes throughout the United States, people are asked to make the pledge of the Legion of Decency. These few lines are designed as a reminder of the purpose of the pledge, so that it may not degenerate into something merely mechanical. The promise should, after all, be made intelligently, with a firm intention of observing it. If, after being made, the promise is callously and repeatedly broken, it is difficult to see how the one who acts thus can be called anything else but a "two-timer," a "welsher," a plain hypocrite.

Those who take the pledge of the Legion of Decency promise in brief to stay away from movies that are listed by a competent committee of critics as unfit for general patronage. That there are some movies which fall under this category surely no one of right mind can deny. That it is a worthwhile crusade to enlist public support against such movies should be equally clear.

Moviemakers are guided by public opinion. If people stay away from

the bad movies, it will stop their production. If such movies stop making money, this is perhaps the only cogent argument some moviemakers can understand for not turning them out.

Most Catholics (and many others besides) will express agreement with this stand. It cannot be too much emphasized that the pledge of the Legion of Decency is a voluntary thing. No one is forced to make it. But surely this much should be expected, that, whether you are 15 or 50 or 95, if you take the pledge, you should make a sincere effort to keep it.

For parents, this means checking the movie lists for themselves and their children. For young people, it means having backbone enough to stand aside from the crowd in this matter where principle is involved. Just because a B movie gets a lot of publicity, and the kids are talking about it, doesn't mean that your life will be shattered if you don't see it. Don't, we plead, weasel out of your promise. Stay away from the objectionable B movies. Make the Legion effective as only you can do.

The Public and Politicians

A letter in the correspondence columns of the weekly *Ave Maria* struck us as very significant in its comments on political morality. Its writer was Mr. Adlai E. Stevenson, and since by the time this appears in print, the national election returns will be in, we can quote him without fear of being accused of favoritism.

Actually, whether you are for Mr. Stevenson or against him, his remarks in this context make much sense:

"In my travels I meet a great many young people, and I am constantly distressed by their lack of interest in a political career. It is as rare in this country as it is commonplace in European states, for a young man of special promise to aspire to public life. Often one who does is discouraged by his parents or friends, and ends up in a brokerage office.

"Why is this so? If politics, as Bishop Mussio says, and as I agree, is 'the special application of the principles of morality and religion to the service of the state,' why are public careers shunned by so many good people? There is no easy answer to this question, but I surmise that the problem is at its roots a moral one. People usually get the kind of political leaders they deserve. If the dominant groups in a community are motivated by materialism and self-interest, leaders will inevitably arise who reflect and express the interests of such groups. A man of ideals and character, whatever his party affiliation, may go down to defeat for the simple reason that there are not

enough people who agree with him, or who take the trouble to say so. When such a thing happens, as it does only too often, one realizes what an awesome responsibility rests on each citizen if our democratic society is to continue.

"Democracy cannot be saved by the super-men, but only by the unswerving devotion and goodness of millions of little men. In nurturing the spiritual lives of these millions, the Church acts as one of the great guardians of our liberty."

Bending the Seventh Commandment

This short piece is not concerned with the big crook, the man who robs a bank or embezzles thousands of dollars from his place of employment. It is concerned with the little crook, the pilferer, the cheater. Apparently there are a great many of these little crooks on the loose. A recent article in *Columbia* provides the amazing information that \$500 million per year are lost by business concerns throughout the country as a result of the pilferings of dishonest employees.

The article quotes James M. Henderson, vice-president of Fidelity and Deposit Company of Maryland:

"Not too long ago embezzlement was the worry of surety people, accountants and law enforcement groups. Today it's gotten to the point where all employers should give careful study to internal controls, cash receipts and audit methods and adopt all possible preventive measures."

There are, we fear, many petty pilferers who try to justify their pilfering or explain it away. But there should be no doubt that the following represent transgressions of the seventh commandment, and may be serious, if the amount involved is sufficiently large.

Cheating public service officials of street car and railroad companies, of light and telephone utilities, etc. Some people say: "These companies are so big they will never miss the small amount I deprive them of." This is a poor excuse for cheating.

Picking up articles of some value around the shop or factory where one works, under the pretense that they would be thrown away in any case. If, of course, it is established that the thing taken was actually in the category of scrap material, and of no value whatever to the company, to take it would not involve injustice. But only too often the tool or the goods taken are of very definite value, and that the value happens to be small does not excuse from guilt.

Dipping into the company cash box by trusted employees for coffee money or other small odds and ends. They intend, of course, (let us hope), to pay it back, but how often actually does the full amount get paid back? There must be a great deal of such careless "dipping" to make up the staggering total of \$500 million a year.

We suggest a severe self-examination in this matter of pilfering to all readers of these lines. For surely all will agree that the ideal of absolute

integrity and honesty in all one's dealings with others is of supreme importance to every human being.

Recharging the Spiritual Battery

From time to time in THE LIGUORIAN we have expressed our enthusiastic support of the lay-retreat movement. It is an apostolate, we believe, of tremendous import for the future of the Church and of our country as well. A lay retreat represents for the individual who makes it, a mental, moral and spiritual pick-up which must inevitably influence him to be a better Catholic and a better citizen.

Some statistics reflecting the enlarged scope of this movement recently came to our attention. During 1954 and 1955 some 400,000 laymen made closed retreats. They gathered in 159 retreat houses throughout the nation, 77 of which are permanent, and 82 temporary. We have no doubt that the figures for the ensuing two years will show a marked increase.

Yet there is no room for complacency. The number 400,000 may seem large, but it represents less than one tenth of the total number of Catholic men. While much has been done, much remains to be done in the way of spreading the good word as to the great value of lay retreats. Priests engaged in this work are doing what they can, but the publicity angle remains, it seems to us, a layman's responsibility. It is the retreatants themselves who must win over

other men to a realization that a week-end retreat can help them tremendously to gain the right perspective on life and their relationship to God and their families and their fellow men. And from a right perspective alone can come true peace of mind.

The words of Pope Pius XI in 1929 sum it up very well:

"We most strongly recommend those spiritual exercises which are made in private and which are called 'closed.' For in these a man is more easily separated from intercourse with creatures and concentrates the dissipated powers of his soul on God and himself and on the contemplation of eternal truths."

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SIGNPOSTS UPWARD

Right and Wrong Desires

John Fitzpatrick, C.S.S.R.

THE last two commandments of the decalogue deal with the unfortunate tendency of the human mind to grow envious of others, and covetous of their possessions. "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife," the ninth commandment tells us. This is, of course, primarily a prohibition, but to observe it, positive action is needed as well.

I. Negative

ADULTERY is a very ugly sin, because not only purity, but justice is involved. More than that, family life is gravely endangered, and this means the children of the family are put in jeopardy of losing that which is their God-given right. Adulterous parents will certainly have their own children to answer to in the final judgment.

When one thinks of adultery, one thinks primarily of the act of impurity involved. But Christ made it plain that deliberate consent to lustful thoughts is on a par with the sin of adultery itself.

"You have heard that it was said to the ancients, 'thou shalt not commit adultery.' But I say to you that anyone who so much as looks with lust at a woman has already committed adultery with her in his heart."

IT should be stressed, of course, that Christ meant lustful thoughts deliberately and fully consented to; if such thoughts are resisted and banished from the mind, there is no sin. But full consent to them implies grave sin, and is highly dangerous, because evil actions spring full-blown from evil thoughts.

II. Positive

TO win in the continuing battle for control of one's thoughts, there should not only be a stern resolution to resist temptation, but a positive effort to keep the thoughts in right and wholesome channels. It is a normal thing for married couples to gather in groups for organization meetings, social affairs, etc. To meet thus with people of the same ideals and the same outlook is a wholesome thing for any married people. The so-called Christian Family Movement centers around the idea of bringing small groups of married couples together to talk over their mutual problems and encourage each other in doing right. Such activity affords help in keeping the ninth commandment, for it engenders respect for others, increased love of husband and wife for each other, and new devotion to the difficult duties of their vocation.

LIGUORIANA

3rd Sunday of Advent — December 16.

How to Save Your Soul

By St. Alphonsus
Selected and Edited by
John P. Schaefer, C.S.S.R.

TO give us a permanent lesson in the salvation of our souls, the Church chooses as the gospel for this Sunday that in which John the Baptist exclaims: "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness; make straight the way of the Lord." John 1:23. Surely all wish to be saved and to enjoy the glory of heaven. But to gain it we must walk the straight road that leads to eternal happiness. This road is the observance of the commandments. It is for this reason that John exclaims: *Make straight the way of the Lord*. To be able to walk in this way of the Lord, we must adopt the necessary means. These are three: diffidence in ourselves; confidence in God; and resistance to temptations.

1. Diffidence in Ourselves

ST. PAUL admonishes that we must work out our salvation with fear and trembling. That is, we must always be afraid of ourselves, distrusting our own strength. For without divine grace we can do nothing

for the salvation of our souls. St. Paul goes so far as to say that of ourselves we are not even capable of a good thought.

Miserable, therefore, is the man who trusts himself in the way of God. St. Peter did so, and experienced the sad effects of self-confidence. Trusting in his own strength and good will the apostle boasted: *Though I should die with You, I will not deny You*. The result? Three times did Peter deny his Master, and swore that he had never known Him.

Humility and diffidence in ourselves are so necessary for us, that at times God permits us to fall into sin, that by our fall we may acquire humility and a knowledge of our own weakness. One who is afraid of falling distrusts his own strength. He avoids as much as possible all dangerous occasions and frequently recommends himself to God, thus preserving his soul from sin. But one who is not fearful, full of self-confidence, easily exposes himself to the dangers of sin. Seldom does he recommend himself to God and, therefore, falls.

We should always look upon ourselves as a person suspended over a

precipice by a cord held by another. Such a one would constantly cry out: "Hold fast, hold fast; for God's sake, do not let go." We, too, are in danger of falling into the abyss of sin, if God does not support us. We should, therefore, constantly beseech Him to maintain His hold over us, and to assist us in all our dangers.

St. Philip Neri gives us a beautiful example of this diffidence in ourselves. Upon rising each morning he used to say: "O Lord, keep your hand over Philip today, or Philip will betray You." One day he was heard to exclaim to himself, "I despair, I despair." The person who overheard him corrected Philip, and encouraged him to hope in the divine mercy. The saint, however, replied: "I despair of myself, but I trust in God."

2. Confidence in God.

ST. Francis de Sales says that mere attention to self-diffidence is not enough. The more we distrust our own strength, all the more must we confide in the divine mercy. This is a balance, the saint says, in which the more the scale of confidence in God is raised, the more the scale of diffidence in ourselves descends.

Those who may be tempted, because of previous sins, to despair of their eternal salvation, can firmly oppose to these temptations the words of Sacred Scripture: *No one has hoped in the Lord and has been confounded.* No sinner has ever trusted in God and been lost. Renew your firm purpose, therefore, to sin no more, and abandon yourself to the divine goodness. Rest assured that God will have mercy on you, and

save you from hell. "Cast your care upon the Lord, and He shall sustain you." — Ps. 54:23.

St. Cyprian says that the divine mercy is an inexhaustible fountain. Those who bring to it the vessels of greatest confidence, draw from it the greatest graces. The devil would terrify us by placing before our eyes the great difficulty of persevering in the grace of God in spite of all the dangers and sinful occasions of this life. Our confidence in God's goodness is sufficient answer to these fears. Certainly He will send us help to resist every attack. When the enemy reminds us of our weakness, we have but to say with St. Paul: *I can do all things in Him Who strengthens me.* Of myself I can do nothing. But I trust in God and with the help of His grace I shall be able to do all things.

In the midst of the greatest dangers, we should continually turn to Jesus Christ, casting ourselves into the hands of Him Who redeemed us by His death. "Into Thy hands I commend my spirit; You have redeemed me, O Lord, the God of truth." — Ps. 30:6. This prayer we should repeat with the firmest confidence of obtaining eternal life.

3. Resistance to Temptations

IT IS true that when we have confident recourse to God in the midst of temptations, He assists us. But it is also true that the Lord wishes us to cooperate, to do violence to ourselves and to resist temptations. On some occasions it will not be enough for us to have recourse to God once or twice. It will be necessary for us

to multiply our prayers, to cry out before an image of Our Blessed Mother or the crucifix: "Mary, my Mother, assist me. Jesus, my Saviour, save me, for Thy mercy's sake. Do not abandon me, do not permit me to lose you."

We should always be mindful of the words of the gospel: "How narrow is the gate and straight is the way that leads to life; and few there are that find it." — Matt. 7:14. The way to heaven is straight and narrow. Those who wish to reach eternal bliss by walking in the paths of pleasure shall be destroyed. Therefore, few reach it, because few are willing to use violence upon themselves in resisting temptations.

"The kingdom of heaven suffers violence and the violent bear it away." — Matt. 11:12. Explaining this passage a certain writer remarks: "It must be sought and obtained by violence." He who would obtain it without inconvenience or by leading a soft and irregular life, will not acquire it. He shall be excluded from it. To save their souls, many of the saints retired to the cloister. Others confined themselves in caves. And still others embraced torments and death. *The violent bear it away.*

Some people complain of a lack of confidence in God. They fail to realize that their arises from the weakness of their resolution to serve God. St. Theresa used to say: "Of irresolute souls the devil has no fear." And the Book of Proverbs bears this out: "Despair kills the slothful." — Prov. 21:25.

Some wish to be saved and to become saints, but never resolve to adopt the means of salvation. Such means are meditation, the frequentation of the sacraments, detachment from creatures, and so forth. Or, if they adopt these means they soon abandon them. In a word, they are satisfied with fruitless despair. Thus they continue to live at enmity with God, or at least in a lukewarm state, which in the end leads to the loss of God. In them are verified the words of the Holy Ghost, *despair kills the slothful.*

If we would save our souls, and become saints, we must, therefore, make a strong resolution, not only in general, to give ourselves to God; but we must also particularize it, taking up the proper means, and never abandoning them once we have adopted them. We must never cease to pray to Jesus Christ and to His holy mother for perseverance.

BRIGHT SIDE

There are 162,922,000 Americans who are not members of the Communist party.

Some 37,011,400 couples in the United States will not apply for divorce.

The Internal Revenue Department will get 43,846,154 correctly filed income tax returns.

Approximately 33,293,000 children are learning something at school.

Eighty-three countries in the world do not have the hydrogen bomb.

Changing Times

BOOK REVIEWS

Thomas Tobin, C.S.S.R.

We recommend that books listed or reviewed in **THE LIGUORIAN** be purchased at your local bookstore. If you cannot obtain the book in that way, you may order the book from **THE LIGUORIAN**, Liguori, Missouri.

A Single Pebble

John Hersey

The author of *Hiroshima* and *A Bell for Adano* gives us a vivid pen picture of life in a junk on the Yangtze river in the China of the 1920's. The central figure is a young American engineer sent to explore the possibilities of sites for dams to harness the mighty power of the river for the advantage of China. In order to learn the river he makes the long trip upstream in a junk that is pulled by forty trackers. The story receives its name from the head tracker who is called "Old Pebble." This man is absolutely dedicated to life on the river and exhibits a wild joy in his personal struggle with the treacherous Yangtze. Called the "Noise Suppressor" his powerful singing hides the groans and grunts of the men as they strain in their harnesses as well as sets the pace for the steps of the trackers. The young wife of the owner of the junk shows the traditional fidelity of Chinese wives as well as the legendary religious and superstitious lore of the river people.

There is no wonder that *A Single Pebble* has so quickly taken its place on the list of the best sellers. Its simple narration of and basic sympathy with a form of life so foreign to our American mind reveal the masterly skill of John Hersey. There is nothing objectionable from the moral viewpoint and this book is recommended to all readers.

(Alfred A. Knopf, \$3.00)

The Quiet American

Graham Greene

It seems to be the fate of Graham Greene's books to provoke controversy, and not even the most rabid Greene fan can exonerate the author from the responsibility for this reaction of the critics and the public. *The Quiet American* has been the center of many varied reactions. Some call it an unfair satire of America; others point out that it is just as devastating to the Englishman who is the main character. It has been called a religious book; just as emphatically has

it been termed the one book in which Greene does not make religion the center of the plot.

The plot is simply told. The scene is laid in Saigon in the days when the French were trying to retain their place in the Far East. The principal characters are three: an atheistic British journalist, an enthusiastic and politically inept American, and a native girl who serves as mistress to the two men at various times. The story revolves as much around the possession of the girl as it does around the political issues involved.

What of the book? It is a satire of the ill-directed ineptitude of an American: "do-gooder" who does not quite know the score but believes in action. Even an American can admit the point of such satire. It is basically a religious novel in reverse, if you will. By that I mean that, although there is no conscious Catholic milieu and no conscious struggle between the demands of the Church and the promptings of self, *The Quiet American* is an accurate portrayal of the life of a man who lives without religion. The British journalist is the natural man who lives his life without any reference to God. The result is lust, murder and unhappiness. Hence Greene has written a novel that is a clever indictment of the natural or secular man.

But there is one criticism that must be raised. In this reviewer's mind Greene goes out of his way to bring in needlessly detailed sexual actions. It is true with Newman that we can not expect a sinless literature dealing with sinful man. But certain intimate facts have no place in a book written for the general public. In a medical textbook or a professional manual on sex, yes, but not in a novel. Greene is guilty of this mistake in most of his "Catholic novels" and he fails in this book in several places. No one asks Greene to refrain from writing about real people with real problems, but in the name of decency he should abstain from descriptive details that do not help the book and can harm the reader. Although *The Quiet American* is a well-written book, in the Greene tradition, this reviewer can not recommend it to the reader, except a very mature and discriminating reader.

(Viking, \$3.50)

Of Wind and Song

Evelyn Voss Wise

Julie Winthrop, a girl of eighteen, comes to stay a few months in a small Minnesota town with her brother, the pastor of the parish. The story has to do with the impact that the people made on her and she on them. A love story that will please the young reader.

(Bruce, \$3.25)

The Presence of Grace

J. F. Powers

J. F. Powers has won fame as the layman who writes stories about priests. In general, his insight is keen and his touch certain. But, on occasion, his knowledge does not run true to clerical life as is evident in two details of this book: the false and unreal consternation caused by an envelope marked "personal to the Pope" and some misunderstanding of the nature of the clergy-fare on the trains. Aside from these two inaccuracies Mr. Powers does have an uncanny way of depicting the life and foibles of the clergy. **The Presence of Grace** is a collection of stories that have appeared in magazines, principally **The New Yorker**. In this book we meet Mac, the colorful salesman for Catholic magazines and many other items; Fritz, the rectory cat; Miss Burke, the housekeeper; the old pastor who had no intention of resigning and many others. Catholic readers will enjoy these tales in which the humor is sharp but not bitter.

(Doubleday, \$2.95)

Coventry Patmore

E. J. Oliver

Coventry Patmore who is called the "poet of married love" principally because of his poem, "The Angel in the House," comes to life under the critical acumen and skillful pen of E. J. Oliver, a graduate of Christ Church, Oxford. The tender mysticism and the strident arrogance of the man are reconciled in his great independence of mind, his predominant characteristic. He was not a typical Victorian, a typical Englishman, a typical Catholic or a typical anything; he always remained a rugged individual. This is a very thorough study of one of the great Catholic figures of 19th century England. **Coventry Patmore** should appeal to people active in Cane Conferences and the Christian Family Movement.

(Sheed and Ward, \$4.00)

Rue the Reservoir

Annabelle M. Melville

This is a "whodunit" which settles the double murder that shocks a small town in the Adirondack mountains. The heroine is a young college girl who witnesses a car with two people in it plunge into the reservoir. This first mystery novel by Mrs. Melville has the usual elements of a mystery story and the classic setting for the solution, all the suspects gathered in one room. For a first mystery novel, **Rue the Reservoir** will hold the interest of the reader for the few hours necessary to read it. It is not in the same class with the popular mystery: **Murder Takes the Veil**.

(Bruce, \$3.00)

Crippled Victory

Josephine Burton

All parents of retarded or exceptional children will be inspired by this courageous tale. Anthony Burton was born without the radius and carpal bones in his hands, with half of his face paralyzed and other defects that made him far from a normal baby. But neither he nor his mother could be contained within the category of the normal, and together they struggled to overcome the handicaps which competent medical opinion told them that they could not. Josephine Burton dedicated herself to the physical, mental and spiritual training of Anthony. This training meant long hours spent in massaging the hands and in encouraging the boy to overcome his handicaps. The years of work and worry were rewarded when she saw her son play tennis and win a doubles championship; saw him accepted as a student at Downside College and receive awards for success in his studies. This English mother writes in personal fashion of her pain and suffering but above all of her optimism in the long years of doubt and her joy in the years of triumph. It is good to know that such people as Josephine and Anthony Burton are alive.

(Sheed and Ward, \$2.75)

A Thing of Beauty

A. J. Cronin

This latest novel by Cronin concerns Stephen Desmonde who gave up everything that other men hold dear in life to follow his star as a painter. Just before the time for taking Anglican Orders, Stephen abandons the chance to succeed his father as vicar of a parish that had been in the family for many years, and wanders off to Europe. Although hailed by some critics as a masterpiece, *A Thing of Beauty* is merely one of the hundreds of novels that come and go without causing much disturbance on the literary sea. The plot and the characters are not too finely done and there is no extra special reason for spending the necessary time to read this book.

(Little, Brown and Co., \$4.00)

Enthronement of the Sacred Heart

Rev. Francis Larkin, SS.CC.

This paper-bound book is a complete manual of devotion to the Sacred Heart and the dedication of the home to the Sacred Heart. Its contents cover the story of Father Mateo, the doctrine of the Sacred Heart, the Social Reign of the Sacred Heart, detailed instructions for the enthronement, and the encyclical on the Sacred Heart. A fine book on the excellent movement of the enthronement of the Sacred Heart in homes.

(Catechetical Guild, \$.50)

CHRISTMAS GIFT SELECTIONS

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Soeur Angele and The Embarrassed Ladies by Catalan. (Sheed and Ward, \$2.50)

A nun detective in Paris.

Stories of Our Century by Catholic Authors—edited by John G. Brunini and Francis X. Connolly. (Image Books, .85 paper cover.)

An excellent collection.

The Last Hurrah by Edwin O'Connor. (Little, Brown and Co., \$4.00)

Best-selling story of an Irish politician in Boston.

The Cypresses Believe in God by Jose Maria Gironella. (Knopf, \$5.95)

Thousand-page novel of the days before the Spanish Civil War. A classic.

The Spear by Louis de Wohl. (Lippincott, \$3.95)

Story of the Centurion who pierced the heart of Christ.

The Unhurrying Chase by Hilda Prescott. (Macmillan, \$2.95)

Story of young French knight in 12th century.

The Four Rivers of Paradise by Helen C. White. (Macmillan, \$3.50)

Rome in the 5th century.

Bird of Sorrow by John Romaniello. (Kenedy, \$3.50)

A Maryknoll priest in Communist China.

Beginnings: Prose and Poetry by new Catholic writers. Edited by Dan Herr. (Sheed and Ward, \$3.50)

A good selection.

The Presence of Grace by John F. Powers. (Doubleday, \$2.95)

Short stories about priests.

More Murder in the Nunnery by E. Shepherd. (Sheed and Ward, \$2.50)

A good who-dun-it.

Tremendous Trifles by G. K. Chesterton. (Sheed and Ward, \$2.75)

A popular series of essays by the master of the paradox.

The Pastor's Cat by Edward Vincent Dailey. (Bruce, \$2.75)

Essays on priestly life by former editor of the New World.

Spiritual Books

Good Christian Men, Rejoice by William Lawson, S.J. (Sheed and Ward, \$2.50)

Popular reflections on the joy found in the Beatitudes.

A Popular Explanation of the Four Gospels by Rev. Bruce Vawter. (Sunday Visitor, \$4.00)

Companion to the popular book, *Father Smith Instructs Jackson*.

Happy Marriage by John A. O'Brien. (Hanover House, \$3.50)

Practical and inspirational for engaged and married couples.

Questions and Answers by Cecily Hastings. (Sheed and Ward, \$3.00)

Rather detailed explanations of answers by a Catholic Evidence Guild worker.

The Christian Life by Albert M. Weiss, O.P. (Herder, \$2.75)

A Cross and Crown book on the supernaturalness of our Christian life.

Swift Victory by Walter Farrell, O.P. and Dominic Hughes, O.P. (Sheed and Ward, \$3.25)

Popular explanation of the Gifts of the Holy Ghost.

The Way of the Cross by Caryll Houselander. (Sheed and Ward, \$2.75)

Emphasizes personal identification with the suffering Christ.

What's Wrong with the World? by G. K. Chesterton. (Sheed and Ward, \$3.00)

Penetrating insight into marriage and the family.

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Thorough examination of the problem of suffering.

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Complete and simple presentation of basic Catholic doctrine.

Beatitude by R. Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P. (Herder, \$6.00)

Commentary on first section of second part of the Summa.

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Autobiographical memoir of the late Miss Houselander.

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LUCID INTERVALS

Two Poles were grilled by the Soviet secret police. The first was freed, the second sent to jail. The first managed to speak to the second before he was taken away.

"What did you say?" he whispered hurriedly.

"I admitted I bought black-market butter while the Nazis were here," the other replied.

"Why were you so foolish as to admit that?"

"I had to," returned the jailed one. "The fellow examining me sold me the butter."

A Texan heard that a factory in Ohio was interested in buying bullfrog skins. He wired that he could supply any quantity up to 10,000 on demand. Needing the skins in a hurry, the factory wired him to send the entire 10,000 at once.

A few days later, a single frog skin arrived through the mail with the following letter:

"Gentlemen: I'm sure sorry about this, but here's all the frog skins there were. The noise he made sure fooled me."

Voice (on record shop phone): "Have you got anything by that Irish girl with the strong voice?"

Clerk: "Well, there's Clancy, Clooney, Shannon. . . ."

Customer: "No, her name is Mary O' something."

Clerk: "We've got Mary Martin, who sings real good. But you want . . ."

Customer: "Mary O' something."

Clerk: "Would you be bearin' in mind that dainty colleen now, Mario Lanza?"

Customer: "That's her."

A woman of cynical Missouri stock was complaining about the ineffectiveness of her hearing aid.

"Why not get a new one?" her son inquired.

"The kind I want would cost two hundred dollars."

"Well, why not get it?"

"No," she replied wistfully, "not for two hundred dollars. There isn't that much worth hearing."

Amongst Ourselves

AS IS our custom, we send out the December issue of THE LIGUORIAN as the messenger carrying our Christmas wishes and greetings to all our subscribers and readers.

God bless you all and grant you the peace of soul promised by the angels at Bethlehem! That is our Christmas wish and prayer for you.

There is still time for the sending in of new subscriptions as Christmas gifts for friends. While the special supply of December copies is available, we shall send that issue as the first installment of a Christmas present that will last for a whole year to every person to whom THE LIGUORIAN is given as a Christmas gift by a relative or friend.

Perhaps you know someone who has shown interest in the Catholic Church, or who has asked you sincere questions about the Catholic religion. We suggest strongly that you give a Christmas gift subscription to these persons. You may, by that little act of thoughtfulness, do some genuine missionary work by helping such people find the peace, the strength and the guidance they are seeking.

★ ★ ★

Giving THE LIGUORIAN as a Christmas gift is a means of saying to friends many of the things that everyone would like to say but cannot say except through a gift like THE LIGUORIAN.

WE shall send a gift card, with Christmas greetings, signed as you direct, to the persons to whom you give a gift subscription.

The special rates for Christmas gifts are listed on the back cover of this issue, together with an order blank for your convenience.

Since this will be the issue of THE LIGUORIAN which thousands of people will receive as their first copy, we take this opportunity to restate our policy. The whole purpose of THE LIGUORIAN is to make Christ known, in His person, in His teaching, in His redemption, in His Church, in His promises of peace on earth and happiness in heaven. Christ is everything that anybody needs for security and happiness, but He is nothing to anybody who does not know Him. It is our purpose and plan to make it possible for anyone who reads THE LIGUORIAN to know Christ and His will and to be irresistibly attracted to all the wonderful things He came to offer to the world.

★ ★ ★

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Your hundreds of letters to us, telling us of the inspiration and enlightenment THE LIGUORIAN brings you, make us feel that you will want to share your joy with others.

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